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The night lamp

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THE
NIGHT LAMP.

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Agnes M. M. Sartane

THE NIGHT LAMP



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STATUE OF RALPH ERSKINE



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LONDON.

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THE NIGHT LAMP:

A Narrative

OF

THE MEANS BY WHICH SPIRITUAL DARKNESS WAS DISPELLED
FROM THE DEATH-BED OF

AGNES MAXWELL MACFARLANE.

BY THE

REV. JOHN MACFARLANE, LL.D.

Author of *Hiding Place, Mountains of the Bible, &c.*

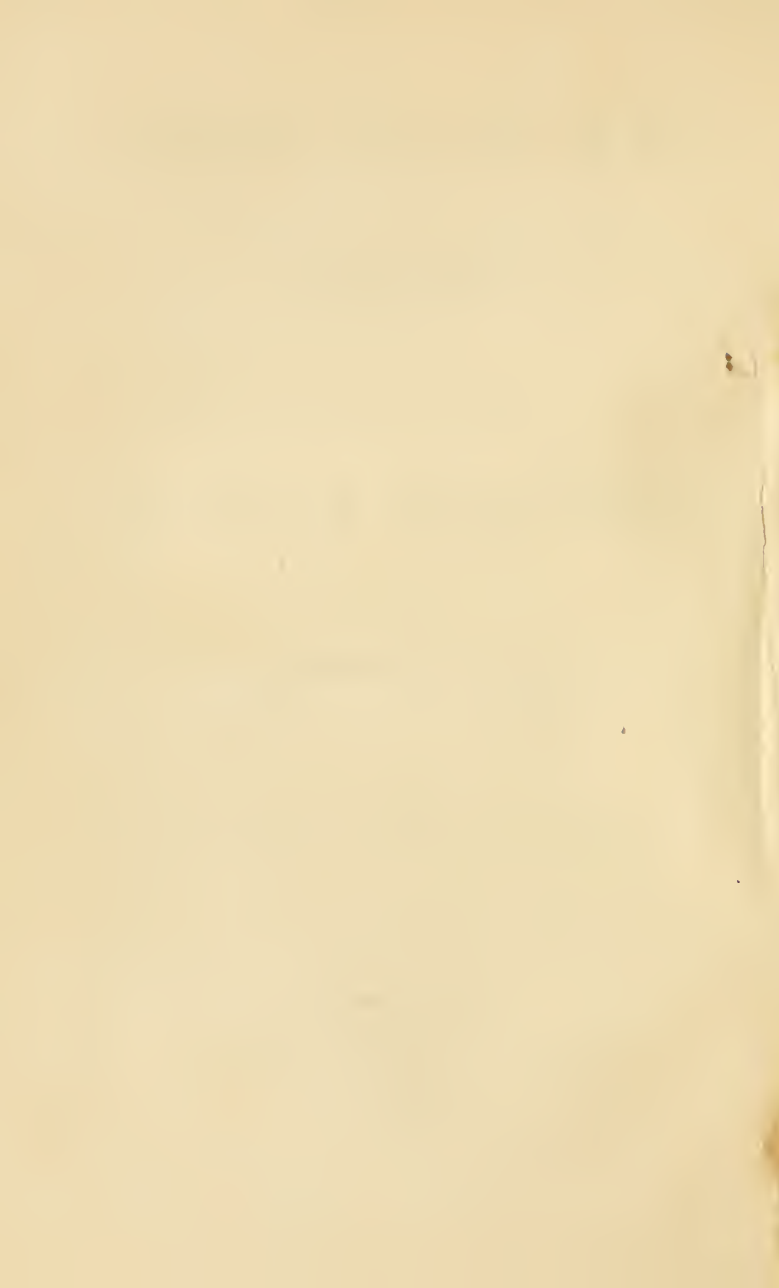
THY WORD IS A LAMP UNTO MY FEET.—PSALM cxix.

PHILADELPHIA:

WILLIAM S. & ALFRED MARTIEN,

144 CHESTNUT STREET.

1855.



P R E F A C E .

ABOUT eighteen years ago, the Diary was written from which these Memorials are now compiled. During the long period of his Sister's illness, the Author took regular notes of what passed between them. After her death, he prepared from these a manuscript memoir of the dying scene for the sole benefit of the relatives. It never was his intention that other eyes should see, or other ears should hear of it. The document, however, found its way out of the relative circle; copies of it were also taken; and the Author became anxious lest some indiscreet but well-meaning friend might give it still farther publicity. Under this impression he did everything in his power to prevent its circulation; and though he has been often and urgently entreated to give it to the world, he never felt at liberty to do so, chiefly for two reasons, viz., the circumstance that the subject of the Memoir was so nearly related to him, and the necessarily conspicuous place which he himself occupies in the narrative.

It so happened that in the course of last summer, the original manuscript returned to him, after an absence of some years. He re-perused it, and was strongly impressed that it was his duty to re-compose it for publication. He decided on doing so, and the present work is the result. His reigning motive has been to do good by this humble instrument to the souls of many, especially of the young and thoughtless, who, while they have a 'name to live, are in reality dead.' This motive has been powerful enough to overcome his original dislike to publication, though for the same reasons still, he makes the venture with considerable reluctance.

The reports of the death-bed exercises are taken almost *verbatim* from the Author's memoranda. The instances in which he has found it necessary (rather than leave any part of the narrative unintelligible) to draw upon recollection or conjecture, are so few as to be unworthy of specification. Had the idea of future publication been in his mind when he daily recorded what passed in the sick chamber, he could have enriched the work much beyond any value that it may be thought to possess. As it is, he lays it at the feet of the blessed Redeemer, with the fervent prayer that

he would be pleased to advance, by means of it, his own glory in the spiritual well-being of immortal souls.

GLASGOW, MIDDLETON HOUSE,
December, 1850.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THE Author is thankful to the 'God of all grace' for the favour which has been shown to this work—the religious public having called for a Second Edition within little more than four months from the appearance of the first. His mind is now at rest as to the propriety of his decision—tardy it may have been—to publish this narrative. The verdict as to its usefulness has been unanimous, and with this he ought to be, and is content. It is his fervent prayer that it may be still further honoured, to comfort the disconsolate, to strengthen the feeble, to startle the self-deceived, and above all, to guide the young to the 'Good Shepherd,' who has promised to 'gather the lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom.'

So far as he has observed, two exceptions of importance have been taken to the Memoir. The *first* has respect to the *conversion* of his sister on her death-bed, and some think that this great change must have passed upon her at an earlier period. This was precisely his own opinion for a long time, and indeed he has nowhere in the narrative (so far as he is aware) asserted the opposite. It is now, however, a growing conviction in his mind, from all he can recollect of her life, that she was not 'in Christ Jesus' till the period at which she herself constantly affirmed she had been 'born again.' And it is to this feature of the book that he would invite the serious attention of the young christian professor, as perhaps the most useful one of the whole. The *second* exception refers to the opinion he has expressed on novel-reading. Notwithstanding the high respect which he feels towards some who have pronounced his views on this subject as 'belated and childish bigotry,' he cannot forego them. No doubt the novels of the present day are a great improvement upon those of a former generation; still, *in a work designed to influence the young*, the Author repudiates the idea of giving even the slightest mark of approbation to a class of books which are for the most part

written for the mere amusement of the idle and the frivolous. It is one thing to say that Dr Chalmers and Robert Hall might at a time peruse a volume of Scott, or Bulwer, or Dickens, and a very different matter altogether to advise the young to such a practice. 'If any youth,' says Maurice Dwight in his book on 'reading fictitious and impure works,' 'would stand before the world "an honest man, the noblest work of God," he must draw on higher and purer sources than works of fiction, and graduate in a better school of morals than that to which the novelist or the tragedian invites him.' With the following excellent remarks of his esteemed friend the Rev. Dr Mackelvie, the author entirely coincides: 'The mind takes its complexion in part from the books with which it has been conversant in early life. . . . Many persons are alive to the dangers of bad company, who are insensible to those which flow from bad books, and many books are bad in their tendency which are not bad in their materials.' *

1st JUNE, 1851.

* Memoir of Rev. James Hay, D.D.

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION.

WITH the exception of a few verbal alterations, this edition is the same as that which preceded it.

It may be of use to call the attention of the reader to the references which the Author has made to his new work, 'THE HIDING PLACE,' and wherein are to be found more full and satisfactory explanations of the subjects of the death-bed colloquies in this volume. In the 'Memoir' itself it would have been improper to have discussed at length either doctrinal or experimental topics. But if the anxious inquirer wish complete and connected views of these, he will find them in 'THE HIDING PLACE,' and especially in those chapters of that work which are specially referred to in this edition of 'THE NIGHT LAMP.'

1st MARCH, 1853.

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THE
NIGHT LAMP.

CHAPTER I.

Ancestral Piety.

‘But a gentler death
A christian never died. Methought her soul
Faded in light, even as a glorious star
Is hidden ’mid the splendours of the morn.’

JOHN WILSON.

IT was evening—a serene evening in the month of May, 1816—and it was at the ancient town of Dunfermline, in Fifeshire, and within the bed-chamber of a dying lady, that the following affecting and sublime scene occurred. On the 7th of May, she had given birth to her seventh son. There was joy beneath the roof-tree of her happy mansion. Suddenly that joy was turned into mourning. Her physicians pronounced the case hopeless; and about ten o’clock, on the night of Monday the 13th, she took farewell of her family and friends. Her parting with the children was one of those touching scenes which, though

indescribable, can never be forgotten. Already had she given her last embrace to her seven boys; and now her only daughter, a sweet-looking child of about five years of age, was raised to receive the kiss and the blessing of a dying mother. Heaven is hearing that silent prayer—the name of the lovely child is now registering in the Lamb's book of life—and when a few years have fled away, the answer to the prayer will be seen pouring forth in those streams of holy joy which refresh the soul, in earnestly working out its own salvation.

‘And now,’ feebly uttered this christian mother, ‘I know that God will provide for these dear infants. I SEE IT—I BELIEVE IT; for God hath said it.’

‘Yes, my dear Grace,’ replied the Rev. Dr Husband, a venerable old man, her father, who stood beside her pillow: ‘the Lord will provide.’*

‘I mean so, father,’ said the lady.

‘Your dear Redeemer,’ he added, ‘will, I hope, shield you from every danger, and conduct you safely to your heavenly Father's bosom.’

‘Yes—O yes!’ and at intervals she repeated the assent—her mind evidently being taken up with the remark, and her faith appropriating it.

She had already one daughter in heaven. The death of that child had exceedingly grieved her husband. Her own heart was likewise smitten with a sadness peculiar to a mother's sorrow for the death of

* See ‘The Hiding Place,’ pp. 59–63.

an infant ; but with her natural strength of mind, and her deep piety, she had been enabled to suppress her own tears, in order to wipe away his. He had often, in her hearing, said that this bereavement had added a new attraction to heaven ; and when alluding to the beatitudes of that unseen world, he would eloquently dwell on the ecstasy of parents meeting there with those dear children who had gone before them.

‘ I am not without hopes,’ she said, in reference to this, ‘ of meeting with my dear mother and my dear little Margaret in heaven. Ah ! Mr Macfarlane will envy me that.’

There was no time to reply. The last moment was at hand. Her features, but now pale and languid, assumed an unearthly beauty. Her eye, but now dull and heavy, was lighted up as from some invisible glory. Her voice, but now scarcely audible, took on strength and distinctness of tone. The weeping circle around her stood in silent awe.

‘ What do I see ?’ she exclaimed—‘ O, what do I see ?’

They looked upwards, as she did, but *they* saw nothing.

‘ WINGS ! WINGS ! WINGS !’ she added, with a most heavenly expression in every feature.

They that were of the earth dared not yet to speak.

‘ FLY ! FLY ! FLY !’ said the expiring conqueror : ‘ O why is his chariot so long in coming ? — why tarry the wheels of his chariot ?’

‘Do you mean angels, Grace? Do you see them?’ inquired Dr Husband.

‘Yes,’ she replied: ‘angels to conduct me safely home!’

Having thus spoken, *she was not*; for the Lord took her.

This was the closing scene in the life of the mother of her whose death-bed work is to be described in the following pages. The only daughter over whom this mother breathed that latest prayer was AGNES MAXWELL MACFARLANE, who was born in Dunfermline, Fifeshire, 5th February, 1811.

It must be admitted that, in the scene described, Death appears stripped of his terrors. This lady had lived the life of faith. From her earliest years she gave evidence of her conversion to God. As the much-loved daughter of one christian minister, she had enjoyed, in the manse at Dunfermline, every holy privilege both of intellectual and spiritual improvement. As the wife of another minister—her father’s colleague and successor—she had adorned and dignified not only the happy precincts of her own sweet home, but that large and influential circle of society which at that period, in the West of Fife, continued to be attached to the church over which the illustrious RALPH ERSKINE presided to the period of his death. Her days had passed away amid scenes of unpretending but genuine godliness. Of the seed of the righteous, she had received the blessing that is pro-

mised to them; and among the 'followers of them who, through faith and patience, were inheriting the promises,' she had never been withdrawn from the influence of their simple piety, and had never been exposed to the blighting and dangerous examples of a religious profession without religious principles. Holy and venerable ministers of God—with not a few of whom that country-side was then marvellously blessed—had been her chosen and chief associates. She had sat from a girl at their feet. She had been taught her theology from their lips. She had drunk deep into their spirit, and followed them 'in the regeneration.' And now, when she had to die, though comparatively young—she was only a few years above thirty—she met the last enemy with perfect composure. She had nothing to do but to die. Her understanding was strengthened with 'the sincere milk of the word'—her heart was God's—her husband and her children were his too, by her own cheerful deed of surrender; and her hope had fixed the anchor *within* the veil. She, therefore, knew no fear—yea, rather, as it appears, she was made the recipient of perfect peace, and died 'more than a conqueror, through Him that loved her,' and 'whom, having not seen, she loved.'

And who were these whom she so distinctly recognised as her soul was departing? She told her father that she saw angels; and angels they surely were. She was not in delirium; she was not even in that

half-dreamy state bordering upon it, in which some expire. Her intellect always strong, was never so clear and collected as at that moment; and her natural feelings, which she had power to control and regulate beyond most mothers, in such affecting circumstances, were never more at her command. The mere sentimentalism in religion was her abhorrence; and if there was anything else which she more strictly guarded herself against, it was religious ostentation or display. The proper inference is, that even before the last breath is drawn, celestial visions may be sometimes granted to dying saints. On no other principle can the enraptured looks, triumphant language, and direct, intelligent addresses, with which some eminently godly persons have left this world, be interpreted. The sublime antecedents of christian martyrdom afford numerous illustrations of this. Such a privilege was granted to the leader in that noble cloud of witnesses. Immediately before Stephen 'fell asleep,' it is said in the Acts of the Apostles, 'He, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God!' What one saint could see in his expiring scene, others may be permitted to behold; and there is much probability in the idea, that though, in general, silence be imposed on the lips of dying believers, their souls are sustained in the solemn hour by

‘bread from heaven,’ of which weeping survivors have no conception, not even the suspicion.

The graphic account recently given to the world of the death-bed of Dr Gordon, of Kingston-upon-Hull, may with much propriety be referred to as an affecting illustration. Just as he was expiring, Mr Hall, his accomplished biographer, relates: ‘He appeared no longer conscious of what took place around him. He gazed upwards, as in a rapt vision. As we watched in silent wonder and praise, his features, which had become motionless, suddenly yielded, for a few seconds, to a smile of ecstasy which no pencil could ever depict, and which none who witnessed it can ever forget. And when it passed away, still the whole countenance continued to beam and brighten, as if reflecting the glory on which the soul was gazing. . . . We saw as much as mortal eye *could* see of the entrance of a soul into glory. Nothing more could have been given us but the actual vision of the separate spirit and its angelic convoy. This glorious spectacle lasted for about a quarter of an hour, increasing in interest to the last, during which the soul seemed pouring itself from the frail tenement which had imprisoned it into the embrace of its Lord. The breathing now became shorter and shorter; then, after a long pause, one last gentle heaving of the chest, and without a struggle, at two o’clock the soul had fled.’ *

* The Christian Philosopher Triumphant over Death, etc. By Newman Hall, B.A. London: J. Snow. 1850.

Such like was a scene that was witnessed early on a beautiful summer morning, in June, 1844. The sufferer was a most beautiful child, of six years of age.* She had given unequivocal evidence of sanctification even from the womb. She knew and loved the Saviour—she had heard of heaven—and nothing gave her so much delight as when, at her own repeated request, the Bible descriptions of that glorious abode were read to her. She knew she was dying, and had no fears, nay, no reluctance to leave this world—she rather longed to ‘depart, and be with Christ, which is far better.’ Her strength of mind and her exercise of faith were, considering her age, wonderful; and the sweetness and gentleness of her disposition were at the same time most melting. On the Sabbath evening, a few hours before she died, her relatives stood around the sofa where she lay, thinking the last struggle had come—she herself thought so—and having noticed their grief, she threw out her little hands to them all, and said, with perfect but solemn composure of manner, ‘Good bye!’ and then she shut her eyes, and turned her head away. A few hours after this, about three o’clock in the morning, they again surrounded her couch. The sun had just risen, and was gilding with his beams the tops of the lofty mountains of Argyllshire, and the surface of the waters on the picturesque bay of Rothesay; the mild and subdued light of morn was from these reflected

* Jessie Burns Macfarlane, daughter of the Author.

upon the countenance of the dying girl. But only for a brief period. That natural refulgence faded away, and in its place came such an expression of countenance as could only exist in connection with some celestial objects which had then become visible to her. She uttered no words; but for a while, whether she was 'in the body or out of the body,' they could not tell. And thus this lovely child of heaven went home.

Recently conversing with an excellent clergyman of the Church of Scotland, whose parish lies on the shores of one of those romantic Highland lochs for which the Scottish west coast is remarkable, he told the writer that some time ago an interesting daughter of his had closed her life in a most remarkable manner. Though delicate, she was not understood to be dying, and being only about twelve years of age, it was hoped that debility would give way to strength, and that early promises of good would be fulfilled in the maturity of age. One afternoon she suddenly awoke, as was thought, from a refreshing sleep—surprise was pictured on every feature of her sweet countenance, and she gazed around as if she had unexpectedly found herself in a new world. 'Mother,' she exclaimed, 'do you see no change on my face? Is there nothing peculiar about my looks?' 'No,' replied the astonished parent: 'Why do you ask?' 'Because,' said the child, 'I have just been in one of the most beautiful places I ever beheld, and have seen some of the most glorious and beautiful beings!—O, I cannot

describe where I have been, and what I have looked upon! Tell me, mother, is there no change on my face? Surely there must be.' Being told that there was none, she became calm and silent for a time, and then she burst forth with an exclamation: 'There—there it is again—I see it again, dear mother—I see these beautiful beings again—they are coming!'—and so she died.

It does violence to some of the finest feelings and most sacred sentiments of the christian heart, to interpret these mysteries as the results of morbid functions, either in the body or in the mind. There is, indeed, such an excrescence as *rhapsody* in religion; and, after a season of prolonged affliction, where there is an extremely sensitive and nervous constitution, with a small breadth of understanding, and that understanding but partially impregnated with vital truth, it is very apt to appear. But this is an imbecility which cannot be charged against such cases as the above. These belong to a class of death-bed experiences which may not be a very large one, but which has, so far as the writer's observation goes, not yet obtained that serious notice to which it is undoubtedly entitled from the fearers of God, when chronicling the happy and peaceful end of matured and triumphing faith. They certainly occur every now and then, but are studiously hid from public observation, lest their disclosure should be set down to the ebullitions of surcharged grief, or

the weak partialities of bereaved affection. How strange that about the truly pious there should be such a backwardness to promulgate these startling facts, and to submit to holy analysis these singular phenomena! Men of science and enthusiastic philosophers are not so shy nor so slow to proclaim the appearance of any remarkable data in the objects of their study. They do not fear the world's disdain, and, with all sound thinking persons, they get the credit of being earnest investigators of truth. Now, the christian philosophy may expose itself to the sneers of the world; but it ought to be as far above the fear of these, as it is independent of its deceitful compliments and polluting touches. It is, however, perhaps to the unnatural suspicions and detractions of the over-cautious within the professional pale of the church, that we are to trace this aversion to publish and defend these supernatural spectacles, as being something truly and literally among the privileges of superior saintship. How applicable to this, as it is to many hundred things, is the saying of our Lord: 'The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light!' There are comparatively cold and stoical natures even among the regenerated and theological, upon which the narratives of lofty faith and seraphic emotions which distinguished the death-bed work of such men as Payson and the Janeways fall, only to produce a self-complacent judgment unfavourable to the intellectual

vigour of these admirable men. It is said of them that they have been great but susceptible and weak-minded persons, and that, in the midst of their swelling imaginations, their reason has been the dupe of a momentary fanaticism. This is an earthly and sinful mode of accounting for the impressive peculiarities of unusual heavenly-mindedness and its celestial accompaniments. Such uncharitableness among religious people has been very baneful to the interests and advancement of true piety. Certainly great caution ought to be exercised in the opinions formed of death-bed phenomena; but, at the same time, the fear of canonising the fanatic should not cause us to do despite to the Holy Spirit of God, and to call that common and unclean which he hath wrought and sanctified. The standard of a christian's dying duty has been lowered, from this over-timidity about admitting the genuineness of that august and glorious fellowship which some have claimed before death with the invisible spirits of another world. Great things are promised to great faith, and we ought to expect them—suffering disappointment if they should not appear, and filled with joy and gratitude if they should. 'Jesus answered and said to Nathanael, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.' Special and

eminent blessings are declared to be in readiness for the children of God when they are called to the last conflict. And why should we doubt their being conferred 'just in the last distressing hour?' Is it not written, 'And it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light;' 'I will be thy *God* and thy *Guide* even unto death;' and 'when thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee?' Such scriptures as these not only justify us in expecting, but entitle us to prepare for wonderful scenes and sayings in the chamber where the good man encounters the king of terrors.

There is another world. We have there two classes of celestial and devoted friends—the one is *divine*, the other *created*. From the former the children of light derive all their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace. The Father takes them under the shadow of his wings, and tenderly cherishes them there. The Son adorns them in the robe of his righteousness, and teaches them confidence and hope. The Holy Ghost takes up his abode in their hearts, and sanctifies them wholly in soul, body, and spirit. Having from the moment of their second and new birth, up to this the hour of their departure, accompanied them through all their pilgrimage, and blessed them with every spiritual blessing, it is not surprising that their en-

trance into the kingdom should be occasionally preceded by such *divine* revelations as must give to their last hours unearthly grandeur—

‘ They see a form that others cannot see,
And hear a voice that others cannot hear.’

Then, from the other class, angels and the spirits of the just made perfect, we may calculate upon not only personal attendance, but cheering and substantial support. The angels are the ministering spirits of the heirs of salvation: they *serve* these heirs during the entire period of their minority, and never leave them nor forsake them. Each saint has at least one guardian angel; and when he is about to pass through the swellings of Jordan, a number of these benevolent beings may be gratified by conveying the disciple of the cross to the other side, and joining in the hallelujahs wherewith the august coronation is celebrated. The highest honour God can put upon the angels, is to permit them thus to comfort and protect his saints in the most solemn and critical period of their existence. Placed as we know every one of them to be, under our divine Redeemer’s authority, and especially to be employed by him in the accomplishment of his work of mercy to mankind, it is difficult to conceive of the possibility of their ever being put into such service, if not at the periods and in the circumstances referred to. Besides, the honours which were paid to the *Head* when he

was upon the earth, and more especially when he arose from it and ascended to heaven, are to be shared with him by his members. Even upon the same throne at last are they together to sit and reign for ever and ever. Pope has beautifully embodied this idea in these well-known lines :—

‘ Hark ! they whisper,—angels say,
 “ Sister spirit, come away.”
 What is this absorbs me quite,
 Steals my senses, shuts my sight,
 Drowns my spirit, draws my breath ;
 Tell me, my soul, can this be death ?

‘ The world recedes—it disappears !
 Heaven opens on my eyes ; my ears
 With sounds seraphic ring.
 LEND, LEND YOUR WINGS ! I MOUNT ! I FLY !
 O grave ! where is thy victory ?
 O death ! where is thy sting ?’

Believers are *at death* made perfect in holiness, and fully ‘ meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.’ There is nothing, however, in this most consolatory doctrine that is inconsistent with supernatural privileges. On the contrary, seeing that their sanctification has been progressing from the day of their effectual calling, and that they are now on the very threshold of celestial perfection, it is probable that the holy agencies of their Redeemer may be employed, and in a way which could not with propriety be employed till now, for the purpose of accom-

plishing their assimilation to the image of God, and thus rendering them fit to dwell before his unveiled presence. In no other authenticated case than that of the apostle Paul have the raptures of the third heavens been enjoyed, and the subject of them permitted to remain longer among men. When these have been, on a similar scale, permitted to others, their translation almost immediately, or at no great distance of time, followed. It seems to be but little of what they see and hear that they are able or are allowed to tell. The rule with regard to such mysteries is, that 'it is not lawful to man to utter them.' Hence Lazarus, who was raised from the dead, and Paul, who was caught up to the third heavens, never broke the seal of silence that was imposed on their lips; and others who have enjoyed similar visions on somewhat smaller scales, have been equally mute. So soon as these had passed before their mind's eye, and they had indicated the disposition to exclaim concerning them, they were taken away to that place where alone it is lawful to make them the subject of communication! These foresights and foretastes having served their purpose, in the strength they infused, and in the joys they imparted, and the last impression having been made by the Holy Spirit of God with his seal, they were pronounced to be ready, and were forthwith proclaimed to be glorified.

Entertaining such views, on such scriptural grounds, we are prepared to expect supernatural scenes at the death-beds of eminently pious individuals. What

useful purposes to them these angelic friends may serve, immediately after death, we do not know, but it is easy to conceive of their ineffable value to the souls of the dying. Opened, as we believe their eyes to be, and enlightened as their souls become, when approaching eternity, we cannot realise their raptures, whether expressed or not, when these glorious forerunners of their immortality hover about and around their couches. So far as is known to us, such 'angel visits are few and far between.' It is likely, however, that they are much more frequent than grieving bystanders are aware of. If christians had more intense love, and more of the full assurance of faith, and if death-bed work were preceded on a larger scale by a great deal more of the 'prayers and fasting' to which our Lord has annexed most illustrious privileges, then imposing and heavenly spectacles, bright and rapturous triumphs, might more frequently characterise the last exercise of saintship in the Valley of Baca. The more perfectly spiritual, self-denied, and useful to Christ the previous life has been, the more likely are such scenes to be repeated and abound. Even faith, *small* as a grain of mustard-seed, can remove mountains, and faithfulness over a *few* things may receive a great recompense of reward. To *great* faith, then, and to faithfulness over *many* things, may be, and shall be granted, what 'eye hath not seen nor ear heard,' and this, too, even while the conquering hero is still on the field, and before he has made his

entrance into glory. What a powerful encouragement is this to a life of holy consecration to God—of cheerful renunciation of the world, and all its sinful honours and pleasures, and of undeviating and persevering attachment to Him who lived and died for us—who has for us abolished death—who has hallowed for us the grave—for us prepared yon magnificent high path to glory, and those bright and beautiful crowns which are never to fade away!

Victims of imagination! creatures of a visionary theology! dupes of an amiable imbecility!—these are the taunts that come most consistently from such as sit in the chair of the scorner. But far from me and from my friends be that dwarfish faith which, because it labours with its appropriate shortsightedness to reconnoitre the small territory that lies adjacent to its molehill, pronounces the claims of others to larger and more sublime comprehensions, to be the distorted or discoloured pictures of a spiritual ophthalmia. Truly we may say, of those who thus opine, that ‘there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in their philosophy.’ Christian reader! if you can realise some of the infinite glory that exists on the other side of the thin veil that separates us from eternity, doubt not of the possibility of such revelations to expiring believers. Remember what a price has been paid for them—what pity and long-suffering have been manifested towards them—what intense love Jesus has for them—what profound interest they awaken

in celestial bosoms at such moments—and with what sinless impatience their grand escape from all the evils of time and sin may be regarded by benevolent spirits, and your surprise must be, not that any of them should die thus, but that so many of them die so uninterestingly as they do. Ponder, moreover, the many scriptures that tell of the pledged presence of God himself, when they come to die, especially such promises and declarations as the following:—‘Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty; they shall behold the land that is afar off’—‘In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them’—‘The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant’—‘The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear him, and delivereth them’—‘I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight’—‘For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways; they shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.’—Meditate devoutly on these and kindred passages, and faith in the doctrine advanced may speedily become strong, and fill your heart with joy and hope.

CHAPTER II.

The Pastor's Death.

'Year chases year, decay pursues decay,
Still drops some joy from withering life away ;
New forms arise, and different views engage,
Superfluous lags the veteran on the stage,
Till pitying nature signs the last release,
And bids afflicted worth retire to peace.'

DR JOHNSON.

THE death of Agnes' mother well nigh overwhelmed the surviving parent, the Rev. JAMES MACFARLANE, of Queen Anne Street Church, Dunfermline. He was eminently a man of God; but, while great in the integrity and uprightness of saintship, he was of exceedingly tender and affectionate dispositions. To the hundreds, it may almost be said thousands* of hearers, who sat under his ministry from Sabbath to Sabbath, he had often been the instrument of 'giving beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;' but now, when the heaviest of all strokes fell upon himself, he

* His capacious church could seat nearly two thousand persons, and it was generally crowded.

was for a season like one stunned. He knew the appropriate consolations, and could address them to himself; but, alas! without that felt relief which is their designed result. At the same time, Mr Macfarlane was not without his supports. In a letter written on the day after his bereavement, he was enabled thus to express himself to his brother-in-law, Captain Husband, who was at that time with his regiment at Woolwich: 'O that you had been present at the affecting scene! I am persuaded you would have learned something that would have done good to your precious soul. She loved you much, as I believe you loved her. She has left me another dear little boy, besides those with whom you are already acquainted. O, how affecting to think of being bereaved of its mother so soon! Shall I tell you, my dear John, of her excellences? No: you know many of them, but not all—she had qualities of which none knew but myself. None had access to witness many of her devotional exercises but me, and even from me she sometimes wished to conceal them. Remember, my dear John, that religion is "the one thing needful." Let neither arms, nor politics, nor amusements, nor gay society, nor anything else make you overlook it. Had you witnessed the death-bed scene of your beloved sister—the most affecting I ever witnessed, or probably ever shall witness—you would have seen the excellence of religion—you would have seen how triumphantly a christian can die. We have every reason to conclude that she died

in the full hope of a happy immortality ; and this could not have been the case had she not been religious. What a treasure I have lost—lost for ever, as to this world ! But I know that she and I shall meet again in the better world, never more to part. Let us ever then keep in view death and eternity. Everything else is trifling. When we come to a death-bed, how contemptible will this world, with all its pleasures and grandeurs, appear to us ! Let nothing, then, tempt you to neglect religion. I am sure, were your loving sister permitted now to address you, she would press this upon you with an earnestness which you would be incapable of resisting. I knew her sentiments respecting you well. They were all those of a sister. I could say much more, but my feelings at present forbid me. Ah ! how shall I do without her ? The Lord knows. The funeral is to be on Friday, at two o'clock. It would have been extremely desirable to have had your company, but this is impossible. Think you of the sad procession from my house to the church-yard, and sympathise with my poor, distressed, tortured heart. Farewell.'

In his correspondence with some of his clerical brethren, at the time of Mrs Macfarlane's death, her husband unburdened his mind in all the confidence of christian friendship ; and many valuable letters of consolation he received in return. It is for the purpose of introducing a few of these, as precious gems of consolation, that any reference has been made

to the sorrows of his heart. Some of these admirable men have long since met him in heaven, and two yet remain with us, and burning and shining lights in the church of Christ all will admit them to be. The first letter is from the Rev. Dr LAWSON, of Selkirk, the professor of divinity for many years to the Secession Church of Scotland, and one of the most learned men of his times, as well as one of the most prudent, most sagacious, and most meek :—

‘SELKIRK, 18th May, 1816.

‘MY DEAR FRIEND,—What shall I say, to ease your afflicted mind? All your friends sympathise most tenderly with you—the best of all friends is afflicted in your afflictions, although I am afraid He is not pleased with the overflowings of your grief. You have not been able to observe, so well as you wish, the gracious precept enforced by the gracious doctrine which you find in 1 Thess. iv. 14–18, and John xiv. 15, 16.

‘I am not surprised that you think you could support the sight and converse of one so deservedly dear to you.* But think again. Would she not intermingle her words of tenderness with reproofs too wounding to your spirit? Might she not speak to this

* To understand part of this letter, it is proper to state that Mr Macfarlane had previously hinted to Dr Lawson his belief in the possibility of his partner's spirit being permitted still to take an interest in him; and that if she were to address him even for a few minutes, and give him some information about the eternal world, it would not at all affright but rather console him, under the trials of time.

effect: "Why do you weep so sore for an event that crowns my happiness? Have you not often told me, that you loved me as you love yourself? and yet you cannot but know, that my gain ten thousand times exceeds your loss. I loved you dearly, but I loved Christ better; and do you mourn like one that can find no comfort, because I am now with him in Paradise? The chief attraction of my love to you was your love to my Lord. But are you not now showing that you bestowed too large a portion of your love upon your wife, and need to be put in mind, by divine Providence, of the necessity of guarding your heart against the common evil of giving too large a proportion of your affections to a creature of the dust? I have lost my life in bringing one of your children into the world. But does not the gain immensely exceed the loss? My prayers for the child, when on earth, were not lost. It is a great addition to my happiness in being with Christ—to have the hope that the dear creatures, whom I was the means of bringing into existence, are one day to be with me, to behold the beauty of my Saviour and theirs. Even that stroke which separated me from them will contribute to the happy event. They will not bear the thought of being for ever separated from their beloved mother. They will love that Saviour who so graciously received her to be with himself in Paradise. I doubt not that the event which you deplore so bitterly will bring advantages to yourself far overbalancing the pain. It

will excite your ardour, in running the race set before you. It is one of the events that work together for promoting your progress towards that better country where I now dwell, and from which you would not be so unkind as to bring me back, were it in your power."

'There were many years between the time when Joseph was lost to his father, and the time when he again set his eyes on him. Yet the meeting was a good recompense for his years of sorrow. How much richer will be the recompense of your griefs, when you again meet with your beloved partner, to dwell with her not a few years, but for ever! Perhaps the distressing thought may suggest itself to you, What if I should never be admitted to the pleasant land into which nothing that defiles can enter! But the same grace that was sufficient for our departed friends is sufficient for us. They could not have obtained an entrance into heaven, if they had not been washed from their impurities in that fountain which stands open for us also.

'You will not think that the loss of your earthly treasure gives you any reason to call in question the loving-kindness of our Redeemer. We have reason to think that he did not preserve his own mother from the affliction of widowhood; yet she never said, "He saves others from such cruel affliction—why was he so unkind to me?"

'One of the best ways of preserving our minds

from being harassed by unquiet thoughts, is to employ them on useful subjects. These the scriptures will supply to you in great plenty. The christian will not perish in the day of his affliction, for the law of God is his delight. I reckon it a pleasure and advantage frequently to commit small portions of scripture, in the original, to my memory. Blessed will we be, amidst all that we suffer in this world, if we can meditate day and night in the law of the Lord.

‘I feel much for my dear friend, Mr Husband; but I know that he will seek his consolation from the source where it will most easily be found. When he compares the dealings of God towards his own family with his dealings towards those of some of his brethren, he may be tempted to think with you, that he is the man who hath seen affliction. But it will soon occur to him, that others have had as much reason to mourn as he, and that none of us have such heavy burdens to bear of the kind as Jacob and David. My best compliments to him and to all your friends. May God enable them to bear their share in the affliction as christians ought to do! Those things are best for us that will be found best in another world.

‘You will probably put your children that are reading in mind of some passages of scripture that are likely, in present circumstances, to make a happy impression upon them—as Psalm xxvii. 10; 2 Tim. i. 5; Proverbs iv. 3–9. I believe the instructions that our departed sister gave, and would have given

to her children, were such in effect as Solomon received from his mother and his father.

‘May God spare them to you, and grant them all grace to walk in the steps of their mother and grandmother, that they may not be for ever separated from them! And may you for ever enjoy those consolations which the lapse of time cannot take away!—I am, ever your affectionate friend,

‘GEO. LAWSON.’

The next letter is from the late Rev. Dr DICK, of Glasgow, the most accomplished theologian of his age, and Dr Lawson’s successor in the chair of divinity. It is addressed to Dr Husband, and has some of the characteristics of its eminent author:—

‘GLASGOW, *May 21, 1816.*

‘MY DEAR SIR,—I received your letter before I left Edinburgh, containing the intelligence of Mrs Macfarlane’s death; and I sincerely sympathise with you all on this melancholy occasion. For a little time, as the accounts were more favourable, we flattered ourselves with the hope that she might recover. But God had otherwise determined. Your feelings at the loss of a daughter I know by experience; and I can conceive the pain which Mr Macfarlane must suffer, by being bereaved of one with whom he had connected himself for life, and whose common sentiments and interests, and the strong ties of affection,

had rendered dear to him as himself. To him this death is no ordinary trial, left as he is with a young and numerous family, without a mother to care for them. How do I and all her friends pity them! and how apt are we to wish that this calamity had not befallen him! But such a wish is vain, and when calmly considered, worse than vain. It is not to chance that we must impute the breach which has been made in his family and yours; it is not the deed of a man, whom we might condemn for the abuse of his power, or of a demon, whom we might execrate for his malignity. It is the work of God, who should be revered, because he is just and wise; and loved, because he is good, even when he corrects us with the heaviest strokes of his rod. Even heathens have delivered the doctrine of implicit resignation to the will of Providence in admirable strains; but it is christian philosophy which alone can teach it in perfection, and impress its lessons upon the heart, leading the sufferer to bless God for his losses as well as his gains, in the full confidence that the former will ultimately prove as beneficial as the latter. When eternity shall pour its light upon the dark scenes of time, the whole series of events will appear a uniform dispensation of love to the righteous; and those which were most suspected will be found to be the most important, and the happiest in their consequences. It were well if we could now believe what we hope, ere long, to see. We should, then, be patient and even

thankful in tribulation, knowing that all things are working together for our good.

‘With the topics of consolation contained in the scriptures you are well acquainted. I rejoice to learn that while you and your friends must severely feel this loss, you have no cause to sorrow as those who have no hope. Your departed daughter is in peace; and you would not wish her to return to a world of trouble and vanity. She lived long enough, as she was ready for heaven. The difference of a few years seems much to us, when we look forward through the dreary blank caused by the desolating hand of adversity; but it will appear as nothing, when the time is past, and we join our friends in the blissful regions where death and sorrow are unknown. While we bless God for our friends who remain with us, we should bless him for those also who have finished their course, and entered into rest.

‘It was not in my power to attend the funeral, as I was under the necessity of returning to Glasgow. I could not find time to write to you before I left Edinburgh. Remember me to Mr Macfarlane, and tell him that I wish him the support and consolations of religion on this trying occasion. Mrs Dick joins me in expressions of sympathy, and begs to be remembered to yourself and also to Mrs Husband, to whom be so good as to present my compliments.—I am, my dear Sir, yours truly,

‘J. DICK.’

The third letter is from the pen of the late Rev. Dr HENRY BELFRAGE, of Falkirk, and breathes all the sweetness and piety of that voluminous writer and distinguished christian :—

‘ FALKIRK, *May* 21, 1816.

‘ MY DEAR SIR,—I received Mr Dewar’s letter on Thursday ; and the mournful intelligence of the death of Mrs Macfarlane afflicted us all very much. I felt a strong wish to attend the funeral ; but as I had to preach at Denny on Saturday, and to assist at the dispensation of the Lord’s Supper there on Sabbath, it was not in my power to be with you. Since I heard of the melancholy event, you have been often in my thoughts ; and it has been and is my earnest wish that you may receive all that support from Heaven which is necessary under such a bereavement as yours. The consolations of the gospel have, I trust, been applied to your heart by the Holy Spirit so seasonably and effectually, that the floods of great waters swelling to the brim have not overwhelmed your soul. Sweet is that confidence in the care and love of Christ which has so often, in the house of mourning, repressed the dark suggestions of fear and sorrow. The task that now devolves on you is indeed arduous ; but the God whom you serve will make your strength equal to your days, and will spare you for forming your children to the spirit and virtues of their mother, and for carrying to the heart of sorrow

the consolations which have supported your own. The heart feels relieved in ministering to the welfare of those whose happiness was the care of our departed friends, and who in their last moments placed them in our hands. Thus we fulfil their joy, and glorify Him who chastens us for our profit.

‘It was with much interest that I learned from Mr Dewar what good hope, through grace, supported your amiable partner in death; and this must be to you a strong consolation. The piety which in her appeared so amiable, from the gentleness and humility which marked every expression of it, yielded her in her last hour a joy which should preserve her friends from sorrowing as those who have no hope, and the memory of which we ought all to cherish, as a blessed evidence of the power of religion.

‘I am sensible that the imperfect manner in which I have offered my humble condolence requires an apology, but I hope you will receive it as an expression of my regard.

‘My sisters join with me in condolence with Mr and Mrs Husband, and Mr Dewar; and that you and your friends may be blessed by the kindest expressions of the Redeemer’s sympathy, is my earnest wish.—I am, my dear Sir, yours most sincerely,

‘HENRY BELFRAGE.’

The two remaining letters are from the Rev. Dr

WARDLAW, of Glasgow, and the Rev. Dr JOHN BROWN, of Edinburgh, who still survive, full of years, and full of honours :—

‘GLASGOW, *May 19, 1816.*

‘*Lord’s-day Evening.*

‘MY DEAR SIR,—It cannot surely be an inappropriate part of the exercises of a Lord’s-day evening, to soothe the spirit of an afflicted christian friend by assurances of sympathy and condolence. O my dear brother, when I try, in imagination, to make your case my own, my heart bleeds for you. I cannot speak to you from *experience*; and *this* qualification of a comforter you do not wish me to possess. But I know the heart both of a husband and a father :—I know that both the conjugal and the paternal affections are felt by you in all their glowing ardour ;—and that the cup which you are now made to drink is one of the bitterest that God can mingle for mortal man. Yet even in this cup there is sweetness. All the inexpressibly tender and endearing recollections of the christian excellences of your departed wife ; the evidences of her interest in the Saviour, and the comfortable assurance of her being “present with the Lord,” where there is “fulness of joy, and pleasure for evermore ;” the delightful prospect of seeing her again, where the blessed inhabitants “neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven ;”—the conviction founded on the word of

your heavenly Father, that the cup is mixed by wisdom that cannot err, faithfulness that cannot fail, and love that cannot change :—these, and such considerations, which are familiar to your mind, will lead you to say, with your gracious Redeemer and Lord, “The cup which my Father hath given me shall I not drink it?” Oh! how pleasing when the bonds of the gospel are superinduced upon the ties of nature! When Death dissolves the latter, he has no power to sever the former. It is true, that this double union makes the pang of separation, in one view, the more violent, inasmuch as it rendered the previous intercourse the more endearing. But while this thought makes the heart bleed the more profusely, it soothes and saddens while it grieves; it binds up, and softens and heals the very wound which it inflicts. We need ties to a better world more than to this. God has dissolved a tie to earth, and made it a tie to heaven. He has given you an additional interest in your heavenly Father’s house; which you will now contemplate as the place of your beloved partner’s rest and joy. For although the chief reason of our attachment to heaven should be, that there “Jesus sitteth at the right hand of God,” that there “we shall be for ever *with the Lord* :” yet surely we neither *can* nor *ought* to feel callous to the interest in heaven which David expressed when he said, “I shall go to him;”—and, if we be duly impressed with the inconceivable superiority of heaven to earth, in glory and felicity, what

he added will be matter of *comfort* to us too: “*He shall not return to me.*” How can we find in our hearts to wish, that our christian friends should “quit those blissful realms, and royalties above,” to descend again to the frailties and infirmities, the cares and anxieties, the vanities and sufferings, the imperfect and mingled joys, of this “valley of tears?”

‘My dear friend, *we* can do no more than thus say to one another,—“We feel for you.”—But there is *another*, who *can* do more;—who assures us of his tender sympathy,—and while he is “touched with the feeling of our infirmities,” “perfects his strength in our weakness.” To Him, and to that grace of his which is sufficient for you, I affectionately commend you, with your heavy and interesting charge:—in all of whom may God give you all the joy of a christian father!

‘My aged and worthy Sire, who has not now sight sufficient to express the feelings of his heart on paper himself, has charged me to assure you of his tenderest sympathy, and of your not being forgotten in his intercessions at the throne of divine grace:—and also to express his heartfelt condolence with Mr Husband, as he has had experience also of a *father’s* sorrow. In this I beg to be most cordially joined.—Other friends enter into these feelings of condolence, and none more warmly than the beloved partner of *my* pilgrimage, whose interest in the mournful event is peculiarly

lively, from the remembrance of former intimacy and youthful friendship.

‘ Believe me, my dear Sir, yours very affectionately,
‘ RALPH WARDLAW.’

‘ BIGGAR, 13th July, 1816.

‘ MY DEAR SIR,—I owe you a debt of gratitude for your very kind epistle,—a debt which, if I cannot repay, I shall be at all times ready to acknowledge. I have, as you may well believe, frequently thought of you of late with feelings of tender sympathy, and had resolved, previously to the receipt of your letter, to send you the little book which accompanies this, as a slight testimony of my fellow-feeling with you, as “my brother and companion in tribulation.” There is probably no sentiment in it with which your mind has not been long familiar, and scarcely any to which it has not been lately forcibly directed. But I shall have my reward if its perusal beguile a few moments of your loneliness, and be happy indeed if it in any measure conduce to the alleviation of your grief and the restoration of your tranquillity. The affliction with which an infinitely wise and good Providence has been pleased to visit us, is, as you justly remark, perhaps the severest of an earthly kind with which we could have been visited. I have certainly lost one of the most valuable wives with whom any man ever was blessed; and from all that I have heard of Mrs Macfarlane, I have no reason to think your bereavement

less afflictive than my own. The cup that has been poured out to us is indeed a bitter one—"the wormwood and the gall." But let us not forget that the hand of infinite wisdom, and, I hope, also of infinite kindness, mingled the draught; and bitter as it is, it is not without its tempering and even sweetening ingredients. He who put it into our hands had an indisputable, and, I would fain add, an undisputed right to do so; and it must be our own fault if it does not conduce to our spiritual improvement, and our final salvation. It will be well if the cutting off those channels through which, for a series of years, so much of the divine kindness has flowed to you and me, and flowed so regularly and abundantly, that we were in great danger sometimes of mistaking the stream for the spring,—it will be well if the drying them up lead us more directly to the great source of blessedness, the Fountain of Good, ever full and ever flowing.

‘Like you, my dear Sir, I derive abundant consolation, from my firm persuasion, founded not on a few expressions in the view of death, though even these were very satisfactory, but on an even course of christian conduct—an active doing, and a patient suffering, of the will of God,—that the event so painful to me has been infinitely advantageous to my dearest earthly friend; and it is, I trust, my earnest wish, my determined resolution, and my humble hope, that, following her as she followed Christ, in faith and humility, patience and charity, I will go to her, as she cannot return to

me. I see nothing inconsistent with the letter of scripture, and I see much consonant with its spirit, as well as with the soundest deductions of reason, and the best feelings of regenerated humanity, in the idea suggested by you of the probable interest which departed saints have in the happiness of those whom they have left behind them. I am apt to think that, with regard to the *locality* of departed spirits, we not only necessarily think confusedly, but frequently think wrong. We are not improbably in the midst of the invisible state, and only need our eyes opened, like the prophet's servant, to behold its realities. We have no reason to think that dissolution in any way destroys those modes of thinking and feeling to which the person was habituated during life. The general frame of thinking and feeling in the renewed mind receives no alteration, except that arising from prodigious improvement, probably flowing from obtaining freedom at once from all the drawbacks which originate in our material constitution in its present state. In this case, it is reasonable to suppose that every worthy attachment will continue, increased probably in its ardour, as well as refined from all its imperfections, and freed from all anxiety, in consequence of more enlarged views of the divine providential procedure, and a perfect confidence in the wisdom and goodness of God. We know that the spirits of the just made perfect are *ισαγγελοι*—like to, equal with, angels; we know that the angels are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who

are heirs of salvation. I cannot help thinking that, from the greater fitness of spirits, who have themselves experienced the temptations and sorrows of life, to suggest consolation and direction to the mind of a distressed saint, than angels, who, however benevolent, know nothing of the sympathy learned by suffering, there is a probability of their being thus employed in the merciful dispensation of an infinitely wise government. And sure, my dear Sir, your dearest Grace and my dearest Jane must be strangely altered, if, in consistency with the divine will, they could do so, should they not do what lies in their power to alleviate our distresses and to promote our comfort. But whatever there may be in this, we have "the sure word of prophecy," that if we, like them, live and die in the Lord, we will in a few short years meet again, never, never to part; and, in the meantime, we are *sure* that their Lord and ours does not regard our sufferings with indifference, and will make all things work together for our good.

'I have great reason to be thankful, that the Providence who took the daughter kindly spared the mother. Mrs Nimmo is a great comfort to me, and an unspeakable advantage to my poor motherless children. I feel exceedingly for you in this point of view. But I know that God can supply *all* you need, according to his riches in glory, through Christ Jesus; and I pray that he may make *all* grace abound towards you. Mrs Nimmo unites with me in most

affectionate condolence. Remember me kindly and respectfully to Mr Husband; and believe me to be, yours, with esteem and affection,

‘ JOHN BROWN.

From his revered colleague in the ministry and father-in-law, the Rev. Dr Husband, he at this season derived unspeakable comfort. Dr Husband excelled as a comforter. A man of acute and lofty intellect, and of highly refined feelings, he handled with much dexterity those precious truths of the Bible, to which, at the same time, he had given the full assurance of his own faith. If any earthly relationship could have made up for the loss Mr Macfarlane had sustained, in the society and sympathy of this venerable christian, that loss was repaired. None was more sensible of his inestimable worth, in this and in many other respects, than his son-in-law. During the long term of their joint pastorate, about thirty-six years, they had never had one unpleasant or jarring scene; and when the aged senior pastor died, on the 17th of May, 1821, Mr Macfarlane found that his ties to life were broken. He thus writes to Captain Husband:—

‘ DUNFERMLINE, 5th Feb., 1822.

‘ MY DEAR JOHN,—I have never heard from you since you left Dunfermline, but once, which was after informing you of the heaviest loss I ever sustained in this world. I wrote you a few months afterwards,

when the Lord was pleased to add to my former loss, by bereaving me of my dear boy, Walter; but you made no reply to my letter, at least I received none. This I felt as rather unkind, especially when expressions of kindness were likely to be valued. It can serve no end to tell you what were my determinations under this disappointment. The very kind and feeling manner in which you expressed yourself in your last letter to your brother James, respecting *one* whose memory is and ever will be dear, very dear to me, has determined me to forget grievances. A recent affliction—the heaviest I have ever met with (one excepted) in the course of my pilgrimage through this weary wilderness—makes me think lightly of some other afflictions, and constrains me now to write you. Your father's death has bereaved us of one who was very dear to us all, and was a bond of union among us. His departure has left a most dismal blank in our society—we all feel it and lament it. But on whom, think you, is it likely to make the most lasting impression? I mean no reflection upon any, when I say that I apprehend it is upon myself. He was to me a wise counsellor, a prudent reprover, and a kind friend. He tenderly loved my young ones, as surviving parts of *her* whom he highly valued, and had good reason to value, for she almost adored him. Had he been spared for a few years, my boys and girl would have felt the advantage of one who sincerely interested himself in their welfare. Of this advantage

they are now bereaved, for ever bereaved; and I must struggle alone to bring them on in life. James and William will, I hope, soon do for themselves. The other five must, for a considerable number of years, have their dependence on me. When I say this, I am far from overlooking the dependence which we all have on God. It will be good for us if the bereavements we meet with in life lead us to a more *entire* dependence on Him in whom we live, and move, and have our being. I am now well advanced in life, and may lay my account with soon taking my leave of it. Were it not for the sake of my young ones, I have very little to attach me to life. My old and best friends are dropping away, one after another. I find myself almost left alone. May God teach me so to number my days, that I may apply my heart unto wisdom! It is a vastly serious matter to die! It decides our fate for eternity. Our lot beyond it must be happiness or misery, unalterable and unending.'

The death of Dr Husband made a deep and lasting impression on his surviving colleague, now advanced in years, and bending down under trials and infirmities. Shortly afterwards Mr Macfarlane published a memoir of Dr Husband, in which he pays the following high and just tribute to his character :—

'As a preacher, Dr Husband possessed a sound understanding, and a quick and lively apprehension of

mind. His discourses were always solid and judicious, the result of mature thought and great diligence. The language in which he expressed them was particularly neat and accurate. He never offered to God that which cost him nothing, or satisfied himself with sudden and loose compositions. His discourses, with very few exceptions, were fully written out. His *manner* in the pulpit was not showy, but serious and interesting, engaging the attention, and affecting the hearts of his audience. His *methods* were simple, and generally textual. All pomp and ostentation in the pulpit he mortally hated, and carefully exemplified in his own manner the very opposite. At times he would indulge in unfolding the terrors of Sinai, but his favourite theme was the gospel of Christ; and he had a peculiar dexterity in showing the connection between the law and the gospel, and the influence which the one had upon the other. His knowledge of human nature, and his singular discrimination of human character, enabled him to make his instructions bear with peculiar aptitude upon the prevailing dispositions of his hearers, whether in the way of reproof and correction, or of encouragement and consolation. He never affected a vain ostentation of learning or wit in his sermons, but chose to appear as one who was in good earnest himself, and intent upon doing good to the souls of men. In a word, he was a workman that needed not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

‘His talents for managing ecclesiastical causes were uncommon : his mind enabled him readily to comprehend them ; he considered them with impartiality ; his reasonings were forcible, and conducted, when the subjects under deliberation were important and interesting, with very considerable powers of eloquence. This feature in his character will be readily attested by his co-presbyters, who have witnessed the active interest he took in the subjects under discussion, and will long remember the able assistance he gave for bringing them to an amicable termination. While he saw and felt the necessity of maintaining the just authority of ecclesiastical decisions, he was averse to the having that authority unnecessarily interposed, and always wished the government of the church to be conducted with lenity and moderation. His prudence was often seen in conducting an affair of difficulty, or managing a debate of consequence ; in foreseeing probable difficulties, and finding out proper expedients, in which he was often singularly happy.

‘His dispositions were highly *social*, and no man enjoyed a friend with a greater relish, or was better qualified to communicate a reciprocal pleasure. He had an uncommon dexterity in hitting on those topics which are proper for general conversation, and saying those things which are calculated to entertain and to please. He was quick in discerning whatever was improper in others, and was careful to avoid everything of the kind in his own behaviour. There was a polish

and politeness in his manner, which made him agreeable to all with whom he had intercourse, and qualified him to be the companion and delight of the higher ranks of society, in which he never forgot the sanctity of the clerical character, and the respect that was due to the religion of the gospel. He was particularly cautious in his expressions, when remarking on the character and conduct of other men. He was a lover of good men, and a friend of mankind. He detested rash and censorious reflections upon characters, and discouraged sitting in judgment upon the hearts and states of others; he would no more have slandered a fellow-christian, than he would have cheated and oppressed him. The writer of this memoir was often delighted in hearing him check, especially in young people, illiberal and ill-natured observations respecting the character and deportment of those about whom they conversed; here his maxim was, "Speak evil of no man."

High as his attainments were, he had a natural diffidence and distrust of himself; he was always ready to receive information from any quarter, and paid a great deference to the judgment and reasons of others. He loved peace, he studied peace, he cultivated peace, and was ready to make considerable sacrifices for the sake of peace. To methods of violence and wrath, he had a natural,—a strong aversion. He was peculiarly distinguished for tenderness of mind, and in all his ways was careful not to violate the rights of conscience.

‘In all schemes of liberal improvement and benevolence, he was uncommonly active and persevering. Nothing of this kind, that was consistent with his official character, was ever attempted in Dunfermline, in which he did not take a decided part. In forming and managing bible and missionary societies, schemes for the support and comfort of the poor, etc. etc., he was skilful, active, and unwearied. Here his loss in Dunfermline will be sensibly and deeply felt; his solid judgment, his uncommon capacity of distinguishing the differences of things, and discerning the true state of matters under consideration, rendered him extremely useful. Such was the ardour and activity of his disposition, that he was not easily tired or soon discouraged by the difficulties attending attempts at improvement. He was truly a man of public spirit.

‘His piety was uniform,—was a steady, regular course of serious regard to God, without the least tincture of or tendency to enthusiasm, notwithstanding some natural warmth and eagerness of temper. His religion pervaded every part of his conduct in public and private life, at home and abroad. It was his study ever to act as seeing Him who is invisible.

‘His afflictions he endured with exemplary patience and resignation, and he afforded satisfactory evidence that he died in the faith and hope of that gospel which he had long and faithfully preached. In his last illness he repeatedly declared, “that he had

strong consolation, *without fear*, in the hope set before him." After recovering a little from a severe nervous affection, he lifted up his eyes, and fixing them on his colleague, who stood by him, he said, with much emphasis, "The Lord be with you." On another occasion, the same individual sitting by and watching his motions, heard him utter a groan, which led him to inquire whether he wanted anything. He looked up, and said, "I was thinking on these words of the prophet, 'Glorify ye the Lord in the fires.'" When it was remarked, "Well, Sir, I hope you are doing so; you are acquiescing in the will of God under your afflictions, and in so doing you are glorifying God," he replied, "I wish to do it."

'On the Sabbath, ten days before his death, when very much distressed, his son remarked to him, "You have had very few Sabbaths like this, father." "True," said he, "but there remaineth a rest for the people of God. O to have a well-grounded hope of that rest!" On another occasion his son said, "I wish I could relieve you, father." In answer to this he said with much feeling, "I believe you would, James, but vain is the help of man; my trust is in the name of the Lord." At another time the same relation remarked to him, that Paul had arrived at a high attainment when he said, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life," etc. (Rom. viii. 38, 39.) With considerable energy he said, "O yes, glorious triumph; glorious triumph!" Many other passages of

scripture were, at intervals, repeated by him in a manner which plainly showed the delight he had in them, and the comfort he derived from them. But such was the nature of his complaint, that he was unable for some days before his death to utter almost a word. This was peculiarly distressing to his relatives and friends; but such was the will of Him over whose ways we have no control. It was remarked by one who constantly attended him, that he had never seen death approach any individual so gradually. The king of terrors seemed to approach him with steps imperceptible, even to the anxious observers who surrounded him. At last, however, on the 17th of May, he inflicted the stroke which parted his soul from his body, which, there is no doubt, has winged its way to the mansions of eternal rest, where it associates with the spirits of the just, in the vision and fruition of God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace." Who can be so insensible as not to exclaim, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his?"

Mr Macfarlane survived this affliction only about two years. The last charm of life to him had fled. In the winter of 1823 he endured a great amount of bodily suffering, and that with much christian patience. This chapter shall be closed with a brief account of some of his death-bed scenes and sayings:—

At his bed-side, one afternoon shortly before his decease, and after a season of spiritual darkness had been endured, sat the Rev. Ebenezer Brown, of Inverkeithing—a singularly devout man, and a most eloquent gospel preacher for nearly half a century.* He had come up to Dunfermline, for the last time, to pray with, and say farewell to his friend. It was a solemn and affecting interview. For nearly forty years they had lived in the most hallowed bonds of friendship. They loved each other ‘with pure hearts fervently.’ They were knit together, as were Jonathan and David; and to Mr Brown the prospect of his friend’s death was oppressively painful. It was when Mr Brown was on his death-bed, about thirteen years afterwards, that he narrated the scene referred to, to the compiler of these notices. † As far as memory is serviceable, the following is a substantially correct account of what was then communicated. After some conversation about the solemnity of death, and the perfect safety of the believer when subjected to its stroke, Mr Brown, while he lay tranquil as a sleeping infant on his bed of pain, thus expressed himself:—

‘Sir, I loved your father. He was a good man, a powerful preacher of Jesus and his cross, and a faithful minister. We were long associated, in this

* Son of the well-known John Brown, of Haddington, author of the *Self-Interpreting Bible*, and other valuable works.

† Mr Brown died at Inverkeithing in March, 1836.

part of the country, in the service of our Lord; and many happy, happy days we spent together, especially at our sacramental communion seasons. Often, often—yea, not a day passes over me, but I think of him and Dr Husband, and Mr Greig of Lochgelly, and Mr Hadden of Limekilns.* But they are all gone; and I have been, as it were, alone ever since they left this world. I shall join them soon now.'

'You formed, indeed, a lovely and attached brotherhood,' was the reply; 'and sweet was the counsel you took together. You saw my father on his death-bed, did you not, Mr Brown?'

'Yes, Sir, I did. I saw him frequently; and I will never forget my last interview with him.'

'Do you think you could repeat it?'

'I can,' replied Mr Brown. 'We had been conversing about the days of old, and the scenes and friends of other years; and his whole heart seemed full of the delightful theme, when some of your brothers entered the room. When first anticipating death, his anxiety about you all, and your future lots in this world, were agonising. I asked him if he was now relieved of cares about his children, so soon to be left orphans? He said at once, "I am: my anxieties are clean gone. I have cast every one of them upon God, and have no fear whatever but that they shall be provided for. The God of their grandfather and their father will not forsake them. I

* Members of the Presbytery of Dunfermline along with Mr Brown.

have no wish that any of them shall be rich or *great* in this world. My prayer for them is, that they all may be *good*, and like Obadiah, ‘fearers of the Lord from their youth.’ Their future condition in life never gives me one uneasy thought—it never even intrudes itself upon my reflections. When father and mother have forsaken them, the Lord will take them up.”*

After some pause, this aged and dying Apollos continued his narrative:—

‘I was desirous to hear Mr Macfarlane once more declare the foundation of his hope, and asked him if, on looking back on his long and useful life, he was conscious of any degree of reliance for his own salvation upon his services to the Redeemer, as a minister of the New Testament? I shall never forget either his reply or the manner in which it was given. Hitherto, from his great sufferings, he had spoken in a somewhat feeble tone; but now he raised himself in bed, as if his strength had returned, and, with a loud voice, which reminded me of his best days, he said: “NO, MR BROWN. NO: GOD FORBID THAT I SHOULD GLORY, SAVE IN THE CROSS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. I AM INDEED A POOR SINFUL CREATURE; BUT THE RIGHTEOUSNESS, THE GLORIOUS, THE PERFECT, THE INESTIMABLE, THE MATCHLESS, THE EVERLASTING RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST, IS THE FOUNDATION OF MY HOPE, THE SOURCE OF MY JOY, THE OBJECT OF MY GLORY, AND SHALL BE THE

* See ‘The Hiding Place,’ pp. 67-72.

THEME OF MY SONG THROUGHOUT EVERLASTING AGES. YEA, WORTHY IS THE LAMB THAT WAS SLAIN, TO RECEIVE HONOUR AND GLORY IN MY SALVATION.””*

During the season of spiritual darkness to which reference has been made, he never failed to use the Word of God; and it was by the use of it that his soul again rejoiced in the smile of his Father's face. To Mr Brown he remarked: ‘It is the word of God alone that can support under trouble, and the grace of God alone which can keep the wounded spirit from despair.’ And to another friend he added: ‘I am determined to rest upon a foundation that shall bring me to heaven; and there I place all my hope.’

‘How have you passed the night?’ inquired a near relative, a little before his death.

‘Very poorly,’ he replied. ‘No sleep—no sleep; I have had a sore night of it. But I have been amply compensated for it all, by being allowed to contemplate in peace the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world. O, I sincerely wish that all my friends, all my enemies, all mankind had such a view of the atoning Lamb of God as I have this night obtained! †

‘Father,’ said one of his sons, who devoted himself during the whole winter to the watchfulness and fatigues of a parent's death-bed—‘Father, do you want anything?’

* See ‘The Hiding Place,’ pp. 122–132. † Ibid, pp. 232–237.

‘O yes,’ was the striking reply: ‘I want the pardon of my many sins, the sanctification of my heart, God’s blessing here, and the enjoyment of him hereafter for ever.’

‘What shall I do?’ he exclaimed, under a severe spasm of pain; but instantly checking himself, he added, ‘What can I do but just trust in God?’

‘O that I had wings like a dove,’ he afterwards said, ‘that I might fly hence, and be at rest, even to the bosom of my redeeming Lord and Saviour!’

Again: ‘I have many kind friends where my lot is cast; and the kindness shown me by them may make me averse to leave this world. But have I not relations and friends in the other world, far dearer to me than any that remain; and why should I be reluctant to go to them?’ And then he added, ‘I am afraid I am too much influenced in my desire to depart by the hope of meeting my dear friends in glory.’

‘Ever since I was capable of exercising reason,’ he said to his beloved friend, Mr Brown, ‘God hath been good, marvellously good to me; but I have been a most perverse, ignorant, and rebellious creature.’

‘But though goodness and mercy,’ replied Mr Brown, ‘have followed you all the days of your life, that is a small matter, when compared with being an eternal monument of redeeming love.’

‘That is a pleasing prospect,’ replied the dying pastor. ‘But I have no hope in anything in me, or

done by me. On the finished righteousness of Christ alone I rest.'

On taking farewell, till they should meet in glory, the last words he uttered to the venerable Brown were these: 'Pray for me, Mr Brown, that I may be spiritually-minded. Ah! the enemy suggests thoughts about the merest trifles.' The promise was given; and they saw each other no more.

Shortly before he expired, and after a severe spasmodic attack, he said to his son: 'Ah, James, it is a serious thing to die!' And as the soul was departing, he closed his testimony and his life with these words: 'The time of my departure is at hand.'

His death occurred on the afternoon of the 10th of April, 1823, and his mortal remains were placed beside those of his lamented wife, in the Abbey church-yard, and near to the honoured grave where are interred his predecessors in office—Ralph Erskine, Mr Smith, and Dr Husband. On the afternoon of the following Sabbath, the funeral sermon was preached to a large and mourning congregation of about three thousand persons, by another of his co-presbyters—a man of vast attainments in the science of true gospel, and who, for profundity of thought and weight of judgment in divine things, might have been termed the Howe or Flavel of his time. This was the Rev. David Greig, of Lochgelly, who followed his friend in a few months after this to the kingdom of heaven.

These records of the holy lives and death-bed scenes of the parents and friends of the youthful subject of the following Memorials must now be closed. By their perusal, the reader has been detained from the principal subject of this volume; but before he has gone through its pages, he may discover enough to justify the detention. They are designed to serve as an appropriate introduction to the unveiling of a death-bed work, which, by all who witnessed it, was considered unusually solemn and instructive. They will help to account for any peculiarity about the style of converse in the dying chamber, and for what otherwise, in the views and exercises of the sufferer, her counsellors and her comforters, might be mistaken for the fruit of evanescent impressions, or the hasty decisions of weak, though amiable partiality. Descended as she was from parents of such unfeigned faith, and surrounded as she had been by a class of friends of like piety, there should be no surprise if we find her, when placed in the fulness and freshness of youth, upon a bed of suffering and of death, meeting the king of terrors at the first with the shudders of nature, and afterwards with the triumphs of faith. We have sometimes accounts of peaceful latter ends, when no relative religion, either foregone or existent, serves in any way to account for it. This does not detract from their genuineness or interest. It is easy for the intelligent christian, who understands that the *spiritual* in religion is not and cannot be inherited

from forefathers, to account for its existence and its fruits in eminent converts. At once he traces it to the sovereignty of Him who 'will have mercy upon whom he will have mercy.' At the same time, to see the piety of the parent re-appearing in the child, is an interesting and useful spectacle. It teaches us the value of a holy parentage—it impressively illustrates the covenant faithfulness of Jehovah, as descending from sire to son, and gives encouragement to those who have offspring, to believe in God and also in Christ, for their own and for their children's sake. Though not necessarily *hereditary*, godliness may be perpetuated in families, through the divine blessing on the pious example, the careful tuition, and the effectual, fervent prayers of parents who fear God. How sadly do they mistake who are exceedingly keen to amass mere earthly treasure for their children! They may or they may not succeed. If they do not, they discover their folly when it is too late to try the experiment of religion; and even if they do, they are either removed from the world without the gratification of seeing the use to which the sweat of their brow is applied, or else they endure the agony of witnessing the profits of a lifetime's labour sacrificed on the altars of vanity, or in the shambles of vice. Wealth without piety is the goldbeater's leaf spread over the mouth of hell. Piety, even without wealth, is the steep and rugged, it may be, but the safe ascent to heaven. Better far it is for parents to secure

spiritual blessings for their children by consecrating them to, and training them up for God. To leave to them a fortune may be the transmission of a curse; and in a few years hence they may be seen forsaken and begging their bread. But to have cast them by faith upon the mercy and care of Jehovah, may be followed not only by a competence or superfluity in this world, but by the blessings of his salvation and the vigilance of his providence. The eminently godly men referred to in the preceding pages exemplified all this upon a grand scale. Living by faith themselves, they committed by faith their offspring to God; and none of their descendants, it is hoped, will belie his faithfulness, or do despite unto his covenant. This was indeed the result of the use they made of heaven. They had no doubt of there being such a place, and they had respect unto it and its recompense of reward. The hope of inheriting it raised them far above the love of this present world, and not only made them feel and act as 'heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ,' but disposed them to care nothing about the temporal compared with the spiritual opulence of their descendants. For this they longed, and laboured, and prayed; and this, we hope, shall be the happiness of their offspring.

CHAPTER III.

Early Nurture and Admonition.

‘ Sweet stream that winds through yonder glade—
Apt emblem of a virtuous maid—
Silent and chaste, she steals along,
Far from the world’s gay, busy throng ;
With gentle, yet prevailing force,
Intent upon her destined course ;
Graceful and useful all she does,
Blessing and blest where’er she goes.’

COWPER.

ON an afternoon, a few days subsequent to the events recorded in the preceding chapter, a singularly venerable-looking old gentleman was seen walking up the approach to the manse of the deceased pastor. His step was slow, his eye was tearful, and his whole demeanour told of a mind sadly meditative of scenes and objects which the old and sombre-looking dwelling-house before him seemed to recall. The snow-white locks that flowed down his neck—the deep and holy aspect which many and grave experiences had given to a face of perfect symmetry—the look of heavenly contemplation that came from a dark but exquisitely-benevolent eye—and the gentle stoop of

what had been a somewhat tall and commanding form, told of a good old age and a good old discipleship. As he passed through the gate, his eye first glanced at the spacious and remarkable edifice, the church, within whose walls so often he had heard, and so often himself preached the glorious gospel. His heart gave way within him as he reflected on the pulpit now vacant—his former friends, the co-pastors, with whom, during a long and lovely, though in some measure afflicted, life, he had enjoyed a holy fellowship, being now gathered to their fathers; but, as the thought pressed upon him of his own coming departure from this world of sorrow, and of his soon rejoining them in the realms of bliss, the consolations of hope chased away the shades of grief from his view. As he neared the manse, however, his usual serious expression resumed its place. He thought of the happy days he had passed within its walls, with a circle of christian associates, of whom he was one of a very few mourning survivors. There they had often assembled—not for the mere purpose of ordinary pastime, or formal visitation, but for taking sweet counsel together upon matters ‘touching the King’—for talking with each other by the way of the wonderful works of the Lord—and for singing together, as they always did before parting, the psalm, or hymn, or spiritual song that extolled the praises of redeeming love. But these loved forms were now invisible; these devotions were now reposing in the solemn chambers of memory; and

these voices were now sounding the Gospel Hallel in the celestial temple. As he thus endured the rush of affecting, of almost subduing recollection, the old man raised his hands, as his wont was, and with a quick glance of his eye upwards, registered a prayer above. And now the youth who had been watching from a parlour window the coming of the beloved man of God, opened the hall door, and admitted him to what proved his last interview, in that old habitation of piety, with the orphans of his deceased friend, and especially with her whose brief story of life and latter end we are to review.

Having seated himself on the sofa, the Rev. Mr Brown of Inverkeithing (for it was he) requested that the family should be called into his presence. With the exception of two, who had returned, after the funeral of their father, to Edinburgh, all the children appeared and sat before him. He told them that he had come up to Dunfermline to see the survivors of one now in glory—to shed his tears of sympathy with their tears of orphan sorrow;—that he had loved their father—felt his death a great loss to himself—and the want of his society and counsel a blank which could not in this life be filled up;—that it became them to be thankful to God for having had such a parent; and now that father and mother had forsaken them, to be sure that they claimed for their father that God who had promised never to leave nor forsake any that clung to him as their protector and

provider. With his ordinary deep, impressive, and musical voice, he then repeated the charge of King David to Solomon his son: 'And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy fathers, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind; for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts. If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.' Having continued for some time in thus exhorting and comforting his weeping young friends, he concluded his address to them with this fine sentiment. It is given to the reader from recollection, but it is substantially, and as nearly as possible verbally, as Mr Brown uttered it. Children who have parents in the eternal world would do well to ponder, and submit to be taught by its affecting and eloquent appeal: 'And now, my dear children, I have no doubt that you are sorrowing for the loss you have sustained; and sometimes the recollections of your worthy father will come upon you so as to sadden and perhaps distress you, especially when you remember how often you neglected his counsels, and grieved his heart by your misconduct or disobligingness. I dare say, ere now, you will have thought it to yourselves, that, if you but had him back again, or if you had to live over again the time you were privileged to enjoy his care and love, you would watch his every look, anticipate his every wish, and be ready to fulfil his every command—delighted to please him, and anxious to

avoid every word and action that might afflict him. You will no doubt, also, be thinking that it would be a great gratification to you if you again had it in your power to make him happy. *Now*, this is what I wish to impress upon you, and I hope you will never forget it: Though your father be dead, and is never to return to you, *you can even yet add to his happiness*. You ask me, *How is this?* Well, I read in my Bible that "joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." Repent you, then, of your sins, and be holy, fearing God, keeping his commandments, believing in and loving the Lord Jesus; and you are certain, even here, to please your departed parent. In heaven, they have perfect sympathy with all that goes on upon earth connected with their Redeemer's glory; and it cannot be otherwise than that, in the conversion and piety of those near and dear to them in this world, the spirits of your beloved friends above should take a very deep and intense interest.'

Having gathered the family around the throne of grace, and placed them underneath the wings of the Angel of the Covenant, this last of that christian band, whose lives had, for half a century, distilled as the dew the influences of christian faith and manners over all that neighbourhood, closed his earthly interviews with the family. During the few years that he survived, individuals of them occasionally met with him; but death, the breaker up of so many ties, soon dispersed them in the world,

and they never all met again beneath that hallowed roof-tree. There was one, however, in the little group that sat at his feet during the scene referred to, to whom, as an only daughter, he paid marked attention, and over whom he tenderly yearned. Agnes heard his parting counsels that day; and it is thought these left an impression which, for a length of time, at least, she felt and owned. The next time we see them together shall be in far more affecting circumstances.

It has been already stated, that at the time of her mother's death, Agnes was about six years of age. From that event up to the death of her father, she had continued under the paternal roof, an object of special interest to the surviving parent and all her mother's friends. Lively and quick from childhood, open, frank, generous in her dispositions, and withal decidedly superior in her natural and acquired attainments to most of her companions, she was remarked by those who knew her as an interesting and promising girl. If her father can be said to have had a partiality for one above another, she was that one, though, at the same time, he was careful not to allow this partiality to injure either her or her brothers. His heart closed in upon his merry, clever, and engaging child, when, at any time, the claims of the only daughter of her mother came down upon him in their touching power. But his heart was large enough for them all, and for each child there was a room of affection in it and to spare. Agnes was never what is

called a spoiled or petted child. Among her brothers she was very much one of themselves, and though not what is called a 'romp,' she was necessarily constrained to share with them in their proper gambols and sports, having in these generally ceded to her the gratification of her peculiar will. Without knowing of it, she gradually imbibed a very good-natured expectation that her wishes should not be disregarded; and thus she acquired a place and a power in their affections which she never lost, and which she continued more and more to deserve.

Her education was, after her mother's death, mainly superintended by her father, and her proficiency was at least equal to her opportunities. The approbation of her several teachers was apparent both from the premiums with which her diligence was rewarded, and from their readiness afterwards to do justice to her eagerness and aptitude to learn. No doubt the loss of her mother at such an interesting age was a drawback on many accounts, and, from what was afterwards discovered, she must have felt that loss not a little. However willing and anxious, no one can supply a mother's place, especially to a daughter in pupilage. At an early period, her constitution indicated that delicacy which required maternal care. As she grew up, and, strictly speaking, had no *home* of her own, she became aware of her need of female sympathy; and there is reason to fear that, from her extreme delicacy of feeling, her health did not obtain

that watchfulness which might have suggested remedies in time to have warded off the approaches of the destroyer. Rather than complain, or be the cause of trouble to any of those dear families among whom she occasionally lived, she preferred to suffer and to pine in secret over those constitutional infirmities which, when concealment was no longer possible, drew from her a reluctant disclosure.

In the manse at Dunfermline she enjoyed, during her father's life, the most ample means of a sound religious culture. From a child she was trained up 'to walk in the way she should go.' The scriptures were presented to her not merely to be committed to memory, but to be understood, believed, and obeyed. Her Sabbaths were spent either in the house of God, under the impressive ministrations of her grandfather and father, or in the tranquil and improving exercises of domestic piety. Her reading was select; and whatever taste she might afterwards acquire for books of a light and questionable character, it was not within the precincts of the manse that such a taste was formed or such a practice was sanctioned. The literature of that sacred abode was distinguished by its instructive and useful properties, and consisted either of that strictly religious cast which powerfully aids in the formation of godliness, or improves the mind alike in what is substantial and polite. Perhaps there might be one exception to this general rule. About this time there was great and general excitement upon the

subject of what were called the 'Waverley Novels.' The 'Great Unknown,' as the author of these wonderful productions was then designated, had struck out an entirely new path for himself, and imparted a charm and novelty to works of fiction which fascinated for a time all classes of society. The sickening and demoralising state of the preceding school had begun to cloy the public appetite, and to confine the lovers of romantic nonsense to silly women and still sillier men. But when the classic and brilliant, the national and historic fictions of Scott appeared, the whole brood of panderers to the morbid craving for such emasculating works retired from the arena, and resigned to him the undisputed possession of the wizard's throne. And a powerful spell it must have been that he wielded for a while. Perhaps never before was it heard of, and never since has it been known, that mere novel-reading became popular among that class of society remarkable for its regard for the sobrieties of truth in opposition to the figments of poetical or prosaic genius. Everybody seemed to be under the impression that it was no sin to be acquainted with the works of the author of Waverley; and not a few, even among serious thinking people, considered it a mark of bad taste not to have perused them. The father of Agnes—himself an admirer of the productions of fine genius, and withal a hearty lover of everything national, particularly if it breathed the air of his native Highlands—

submitted to the universal mania, and received into his family these celebrated productions of his illustrious countryman. If ever novel-reading became innocuous, and could be justified, it was certainly now. At the same time, it is pleasant to have it to state, that ere long the sting of the serpent was discovered—the poison of the dainty chalice was detected, and the spell of the enchanter's wand was broken. Up to the publication of 'Old Mortality'—in other respects the most marvellous effort of Scott's genius—no alarm was taken; but when, in that work, the character of the Scotch Covenanters was held up to ridicule in profane caricatures, and the glorious and divine cause for which our forefathers fought, bled, and died, was misrepresented and maligned, good men threw from them with shrinking disgust the impious defamations. From that day Mr Macfarlane read no more of them, and uttered, on every convenient opportunity, his hearty disapprobation. If, after this, any amiable regard for these fictions remained among religious people, it was almost entirely removed by the powerful and unanswerable review of the obnoxious publication, by Dr M'Crie, the learned biographer of Knox.

It is to be regretted that parents should run the risk of appearing to sanction novel-reading before their children. In the case of those whose religious principles are confirmed, and who may quickly take the alarm on the discovery in such

books of what is likely to injure either morals or piety, it is comparatively easy to cast aside the obnoxious volume, and, it may be, to abandon for ever the habit. But it is very different with the young in general. Their minds are seldom on the alert for what is ethically wrong in the pages of a fascinating fiction; they are proverbially very susceptible of impressions which outlive the period of juvenility, and reluctantly, if ever, surrender a passion fed upon the luxurious in fancy, for a principle enforced by the rigid in truth. And yet how common is the practice of novel-reading among parents, and of course among the young! That the mere 'lovers of pleasure' should indulge in such a sin, may not be wondered at; but how so many professing 'lovers of God' should do so, is much to be deplored. Dismal and disastrous have been the results to many a hopeful child. In respect of novel-reading and some other habits, such as card-playing, attending theatres, ball-rooms and race-courses, there seems to be an impression among many who consider themselves pious, that these occupy a kind of neutral ground between the moral and the vicious, and ought not to be considered as a test of character, or a prohibition from privilege. Among the *indeterminate* evils, as moralists describe them, they may be placed; but certainly they will not be practised by any who are determined to be religious. The truly *earnest* eschew with as much fear 'the shaking off, the slow

and insensible graduation' of what constitutes virtue or vice, as they do the *determinate* iniquity itself. Dr William Symington has well observed, in his admirable essay on the amusements of youth, that, even 'in reference to such indeterminate evils, we can seldom if ever be at a loss to bring some great established Bible principle to bear upon them.'* This is true of novel-reading. The novel, strictly so called, is substantially immoral. For what has been termed religious novels, something better may be said; but of the class as a whole it is easy to prove that their tendency is not good. They are never the handmaids of vital godliness; and even such of them as claim to be the pleaders of morality, miserably fail of their object, and often stultify or destroy the special virtue which they pretend to exalt and protect. They never address man as a fallen, guilty, and immortal being. They uniformly give false impressions and views of life, and commission their devourers into this plain, matter-of-fact world, to be victims of disappointment or spectacles of indecision. They help to make and keep thousands among the silliest and most useless of mankind and womankind. They consume, for the most ignoble of ends, hours and years of precious time, never to be redeemed. They are the proper and peculiar food of worldly and ungodly minds, and ridicule the plain and wholesome nourishment which

* Lectures to Young Men by Ministers of various Denominations, p. 97.

sober-mindedness requires. They create a strong disrelish for the word of God, and for books that speak to man in the spirit of 'the law and of the testimony.' They are sad coolers to the fervency of devotion, if they do not entirely indispose for its holy exercises; and, in one word, they stand in the way of the conversion of the soul, by occupying and gratifying its attention far away from those parts and paths that kindle spiritual concern, and lead to the inquiry, 'What must I do to be saved?' There never was an eminently pious man a novel-reader.

For these reasons, Mr Macfarlane regretted that he had ever admitted Sir Walter Scott's novels into his family; and, on the occurrence referred to, he vetoed them altogether. *But* the taste for them had been formed in his daughter's mind, and long after he had left her alone in this world, did she squander time and opportunities in the indulgence; not that she ever was what is understood to be a *novel-reader*, but that she had a liking to works of that class; and occasionally, as it came in her way, the romance or the drama was found lying upon her table. This is mentioned, that faithfulness may be maintained in the narrative of her life and death; and it will, with other things, help to account for her having, in the midst of so many powerful incentives to vital religion, continued up to her death-bed in an *unconverted* state. As the interest of the subsequent chapters turns mainly upon this view of her character, attention is requested to

it, and to other kindred observations that may be made.

So long as her father lived, Agnes continued under his watchful and affectionate control. She was ardently attached to him, and made it her business, though as yet a mere girl, to contribute to his comfort. Nor was her effort ineffectual. He ever saw in her the image of one whose memory neither time nor vicissitude could dislodge from his heart; and, from her opening buds, he luxuriated in the hope of enjoying her matured excellences as the shades of even descended on his path. While there was nothing remarkable in her natural or educational acquirements, nor even in her religious characteristics, neither was there anything to diminish the affectionate delight of a fond parent in an amiable daughter. He died when she was only in her thirteenth year; and, had it pleased God to have prolonged his life, she might, as far as appearance went, have at an earlier period become decidedly pious.

Immediately after her father's death, in April, 1823, Agnes ceased to have a home in Dunfermline. The manse where she had seen so many happy days, heard so many memorable oracles, and marked so many of the goings out and the comings in of God-fearing men, must now be left, that the stranger may take possession. The day of her departure was a melancholy one. Too young to realise the loss entailed by such a change, and too inexperienced to afflict her

soul with the anticipation of future trials, she was not unreasonably cast down. But she was far from being unconcerned. The dying scene of a beloved parent was too fresh in her recollection, and the associations of merry childhood and opening life were too touching to be resigned without a sigh. On the evening before she departed, she was alone in her bed-room, from the windows of which she looked down upon the towers of the old Gothic Abbey, where was lying the precious dust of her parents, and upon the sacred and less ostentatious edifice where she had been dedicated to God, and had become acquainted with the glad tidings of salvation. And were her meditations this evening of a decidedly pious character? If she herself be the judge, they were not. In afterwards alluding to this, or similar incidents in her life, she invariably characterised them as made up rather of impulses springing from affecting reminiscences than of religious thoughts and exercises. Perhaps she judged severely. To know that she was bidding a last farewell to the scenes of her happy childhood, and about to enter upon a chapter in the history of her life, not one line of which even her lively fancy could trace, was of itself, independently altogether of the question of religious principles, fitted to give rise to melancholy forebodings. How eloquent and pathetic are these allusions of Dr Chalmers to this hardship of the children of the manse, when death has taken from

them him whose toil was their substance, and whose prayers were their inheritance :—

‘When the sons and the daughters of clergymen are left to go, they know not whither, from the peacefulness of their father’s dwelling, never were poor outcasts less prepared, by the education and the habits of former years, for the scowl of an unpitiful world ; nor can I figure a drearier and more affecting contrast than that which obtains under the blissful security of their earlier days, and the dark and unshielded condition to which the hand of Providence has now brought them. It is not necessary, for the purpose of awakening your sensibilities on this subject, to dwell upon every one circumstance of distress which enters into the sufferings of this bereaved family ; or to tell you of the many friends they must abandon, and the many charms of that peaceful neighbourhood which they must quit for ever. But when they look abroad, and survey the innumerable beauties which the God of nature has scattered so profusely around them—when they see the sun throw its unclouded splendours over the whole neighbourhood—when, on the fair side of the year, they behold the smiling aspect of the country, and at every footstep they take, some flower appears in its loveliness, or some bird offers its melody to delight them—when they see quietness on all the hills, and every field glowing in the pride and luxury of vegetation—when they see summer throwing its rich garment over this goodly scene of magnificence and

glory, and think, in the bitterness of their souls, that this is the last summer which they shall ever witness smiling on that scene, which all the ties of habit and of affection have endeared to them—when this thought, melancholy though it is, is lost and overborne in the far darker melancholy of a father torn from their embrace, and a helpless family left to find their way unprotected and alone through the lowering futurity of this earthly pilgrimage,—do you wonder that their feeling hearts should be ready to lose hold of the promise, that He who decks the lily fair in flowery pride, will guide them in safety through the world, and at last raise all who believe in Him to the bloom and the vigour of immortality? “The flowers of the field, they toil not, neither do they spin, yet your heavenly Father careth for them; and how much more careth He for you, O ye of little faith!”’

It was when regarded from the confines of eternity, that Agnes entertained severe and perhaps just impressions of her early history; and it is possible that the contrast which she was enabled then to discover between the mere pensiveness of a dreamy melancholy, and the grander and more severe work to which God, in the prospect of death, appointed her, may have induced that godly jealousy of herself, which disposed her to conclude that her christianity had been only ‘in name,’ and not ‘in deed and in truth.’ It seems, however, quite consistent with what for a time were with her cherished emotions, to classify her feelings in now

bidding farewell to beloved scenes and objects rather with the sentimental than the spiritual. This was the vein through which she allowed those feelings to flow, and there might indeed be a kind of pleasure in which they luxuriated. It was, however, most unsatisfactory; for while it enticed her mind away from the unromantic but instructive reflection which genuine piety would have prompted, it indisposed her for entering upon her future lot with that sober-mindedness which was necessary to reconciliation with the will of God, and to the performance of the new duties in society to which she was proceeding. Hence she lost the opportunity—the precious opportunity—which on such an evening was afforded her of drawing nearer to the God of her fathers, of pleading his covenant engagements, and of making herself over to Him in whom ‘the fatherless findeth mercy.’ She stood in need at this time of a wise, a pious, and a sympathising female friend—and there was, no doubt, such at her command; but, as she afterwards told, she had no inclination to unbosom herself to any one, and felt a kind of satisfaction in brooding over what she then considered the severities of her lot. Allusion is here made to this peculiarity in what might be termed her religious temperament, because it must account for some traits of character and conduct yet to be exhibited. We may date from this time, her occasional proneness to indulge in rather moody views of life, and to invest her condition in society with the chilling idea of solitariness, combined

with dependence. She knew that her father's means had been too limited to enable him to leave a competence for the education and support of herself and brothers; and that though his tender consideration of her peculiar claims upon him had provided so far for her own maintenance during the years of her minority, yet there stretched out before her a long, blank, undefined existence, to be endured rather than enjoyed, either as a debtor to the kindness of relatives, or, as it might turn out, an inmate in the house of the stranger. She allowed herself to meditate too much on this feature in her lot; and thus accustomed her mind to drink from the miscellaneous cup of hope and fear, of pride and poverty, rather than from the cooling, cheering, strengthening wells of salvation. She was consequently often thirsting and never satisfied—often grave, and seldom joyful—often depressed and unsusceptible of consolation. This account of Agnes is no doubt somewhat antedated, and more properly describes her mental and moral state a few years subsequently; but it was now that this peculiar bias in her feelings and thoughts was made. It was in this state of feeling that she left Dunfermline and went to Edinburgh; and the melancholy thoughtfulness of this evening's exercise spread itself gradually through her mind, though she was careful, in all the families where she resided, to keep it in subjection, and as much as possible out of view.

During her residence in the Scottish metropolis, she prosecuted her education with diligence; and, as she knew not what God might yet have in store for her, she selected the best of teachers, and the most useful and elegant of the branches which young females of her class in society, and of her prospects, usually attend. Her progress was satisfactory; but her spirits were somewhat low, and she, for various reasons, requested her father's trustees to remove her to some other seminary, where she might combine the intellectual with the religious, and the ornamental with the useful. She had been far from happy in Edinburgh during the winter and spring of 1824. It was her first experience of the homeless and the orphan condition; and she had not yet learned that necessary, difficult, and divine lesson which Paul acquired, of being content in whatsoever situation she might be. Perhaps it is expecting too much of a girl of fourteen years of age, and in her circumstances, that she should all at once settle down into tranquil resignation to such a change; but certainly had she been by this time genuinely pious, though she might not have brought her lot to her mind, she might have brought her mind to her lot. Whatever might be her chief reasons, she earnestly desired a change; and, accordingly, in autumn, 1824, she was sent to Longridge manse, in the southern part of Linlithgowshire, to be under the care and tuition of the amiable and accomplished daughters of the late venerable and Rev. John

Brown of Whitburn. To her this was not only a pleasing but an important change. It commenced a new era in her brief life. She was now once more—not at home in the sense of the word which was most endearing to her, but assuredly as much so as it was possible to be, away from one's own paternal habitation. The scenes and exercises of her native manse were reproduced. In the patriarchal demeanour of Mr Brown, and his solicitude for the spiritual improvement of all beneath his roof, she felt herself again among familiar and beloved domestic arrangements; in the tender care of Mrs Brown she was made to know, what she may be said not to have known for a long time—a mother's affection; in the valuable instruction of the Misses Brown she met with more than mere teaching—they made her feel as if she were one of the family, and superintended her education from generous and ardent attachment to herself—while from the other young ladies, her fellow-boarders in the seminary, she drew so much sympathy and kindly interest to herself, that she thought for a season her happiness was complete; and most assuredly, if it had depended solely on the affectionate treatment she received from the family at Longridge, complete it must have been, as far as, in such a world as this, pure blessedness can be enjoyed. But the tendency to sadness of feeling was not removed. By and by it returned; and though she confessed that the days she passed there were among the happiest

she had ever known, she still was conscious of a want which no earthly goodness could supply. *She was not yet pious.*

The local situation of Longridge is not of itself fitted to induce cheerfulness, nor does it contribute materials to engage the young heart. The manse and church stand alone on the high lands of a very uninteresting and unpicturesque country. For miles and miles around, the eye is scarcely ever relieved, in surveying the almost treeless waste, by a single object of interest; and the few humble cottagers in the adjacent hamlet were just sufficient to remind them that the inhabitants of the manse were not the only human beings in the world. A pleasing and somewhat singular stir and hum, on the return of the weekly Sabbath, alone intruded upon the monotony of the scene. In surveying the neighbourhood from the heights of Longridge, one could scarcely believe that there was population enough to occupy the vestry of a church; and yet, long before the hour fixed for public worship had struck, straggling groups of farmers, shepherds, cottars, and children, were seen coming up to the house of the Lord from every direction, some on foot, others on horseback, and not a few in such humble rural conveyances as they could afford to employ. Before the minister was in the pulpit, the church was crowded. And well it might. JOHN BROWN was the preacher!—a name revered to this hour in every house and cot, and possessing still an influence favour-

able to evangelical life and doctrine over that large district of country; and not only so, but wherever he went to preach the gospel of God, he left behind him a savour of holiness which was truly edifying. The son of the great and good Brown of Haddington, he, no doubt, was indebted to his father's celebrity for not a little of the respect in which he was held; but the beautiful simplicity and purity of his own life, the rich and marrow doctrines which his lips proclaimed, the valuable works which he published or edited, and the fervent zeal he manifested in the various benevolent and christian movements of his time—for he was withal a man of public-spiritedness and activity—secured for him an amount of reverence, and love, and influence, which in our times, upon the whole, is somewhat rare. Perhaps there might be more such like examples of venerated and beloved clergymen, if there were amongst their order more of what may be called living to and with God, and less of what we characterise as living in and for the world.

Agnes seemed to have enjoyed these Sabbaths exceedingly; and there can be no doubt that the Holy Spirit employed them, and their precious means of religious improvement, for her ultimate, if not her present spiritual good. For nearly two years she had not enjoyed a regular attendance on the christian ministry—and at her age, this was indeed a loss; but now, regularly as every Sabbath dawned, did she go up to the courts of the Lord 'with the multitude

that kept holiday.' With Mr Brown's pulpit instructions she was satisfied, and often delighted. She was in the habit of taking notes of his sermons, and of reading them over in the evening to members of the family and her favourite companions. Her general conduct and industry secured the marked approbation of the Misses Brown; but this, with other semblances of a pious turn of mind, most of all endeared her to them. The writer once visited Longridge while Agnes was there, and was told by the family that she excelled her companions in her ready and retentive recollection of the discourses she heard, and that on every Sabbath evening she was prepared to give a good account of the preacher's performances. A solitary but prized specimen of her diligence and aptitude in this respect remains—a very interesting compendium of a discourse to which she had listened from the Rev. Dr Smith of Biggar (the excellent and able son-in-law of Mr Brown), from these words in Isaiah xxxii. 2: 'And a man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of waters in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land,'—precious words, which in after years and trying scenes she remembered, and which were sweet and refreshing to her as 'cold water to a thirsty soul.'

From her esteemed teachers she now received the elements of the best education. Her progress was not rapid nor striking, but sure and conservative; and her

friends had every reason to be satisfied with the seminary and its successful superintendents. Her behaviour in this family was uniformly proper, and even contributed to its comfort and enjoyments. The barrenness of the locality, which so circumscribed their out-door exercise and pleasures, quickened the appetite for in-door pastime, and hence every element that added to the domestic happiness was gratefully and perhaps unduly appreciated. It might have been so with respect to the esteem in which Agnes was held. When sufficiently on her guard against the pensive habit of which her look gave indication when her mind was not diverted from itself, and which was at once laid aside when her interest was excited by anything striking or unusual, she would become one of the liveliest and most amusing of companions. Indeed, the most of her acquaintances considered her to be uniformly of this disposition: hence the formation at Longridge of some youthful female friendships, which she retained while she lived. Mention may be made specially of one sweet and lovely girl who quickly followed Agnes to an early grave. This was Miss Lockhart Fairbairn Brown, the adopted daughter of the late Dr Thomas Brown of Dalkeith. Their love for one another was ardent, and their correspondence in after life evinced that it had been founded in sincere admiration of each other. Miss Brown's qualities were not dazzling, but they were substantial. Her piety was not ostentatious, but it

was genuine. Her accomplishments were not superficial, and, though not numerous, prepared her for adorning that station in society in which she moved. Agnes and she clung to each other as sisters, while they lived, and when the call to die was given to the one, the other came oft to weep, and comfort, and pray with her. Agnes was first in glory, but Lockhart seems to have been first 'in Christ.' She too, however, is now also in glory, being suddenly called to the 'home of the righteous' when in the hey-day of hope, and on the eve of her marriage. 'They are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down and withereth.'

It was during Agnes' residence at Longridge that symptoms of that constitutional weakness appeared which ultimately cut short her life. From what she subsequently said, there is reason to fear, that from motives alike modest and delicate, she concealed much that ought to have been told, and even continued to do so till within a year or less of her death. Thus, when dying, she told her aunt, Mrs Dewar, 'that she had all her life been subject to bondage through fear of death'—that she had passed many days and nights in sore bodily pain, and had sometimes anticipated an early death as not improbable. During her occasional ailments at Longridge, she received every possible attention from the affectionate family there, which

greatly alleviated her trials. But advantage was also taken of her complaint to fix her mind on religious subjects, and the necessity of repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. The question arises, then, had any saving and spiritual change now come upon her soul? Had these chastisements of her heavenly Father, along with the devout and holy discipline and teaching of the manse, been blessed for her conversion to God? WAS AGNES AS YET PIOUS? The Misses Brown considered her to be so. She bore her afflictions so meekly and patiently—she discharged her religious duties so cheerfully and regularly—she conducted herself in the family with so much christian courtesy and obligingness, and in general so consistently with what was wished and expected of, as well as promised by her, that it never occurred to them to question it. There is reason, however, to doubt the accuracy of their estimate. Agnes herself believed she had not been pious—that she was then and there in an unpardoned, unconverted state. Alas! it is often rather hastily concluded with regard to young people who die at last happily, that their hearts must have been, if not all along, yet early, opened by the Lord. It is difficult in general to decide upon the reality of conversion; but there is much reason for caution in judging of its having been of long existence, merely because the death-bed scenes indicate the presence and power of saving faith. It would certainly have been a pleasant duty to have re-

corded here the existence of, and to have given Agnes credit for, piety even from an earlier period of her life; but the truth must not be sacrificed for any consideration, especially when, as it shall be seen, there are in reserve indications of a worldly and gay temper in her yet to be noticed. True, some may be disposed to say that the judgment here adopted is uncharitable, perhaps censorious and sour; and others may insinuate that if amiability of manners, and propriety of actions, and external conformity to religion, based on extensive and accurate knowledge of Bible truths, do not prove the existence of piety, to not a few who take the credit of it must that credit be denied. Possibly, too, it may be thought that the memoirs of many young ladies who have died, as they tell, 'in the faith,' contain rash conclusions, and embalm in their glowing pages mere natural amiableness for spiritual regeneration, placing in their niches the polished marbles of moral philosophy instead of the 'living stones' of the Holy Ghost. If the publication of this Memoir should do nothing more than direct attention to this danger of mistaking, in the intensity of bereaved grief, the chastened tone and gentle manners of a life that precedes an early death, for 'peace with God,' and for the 'mind that was in Christ Jesus,' the labour given to its preparation cannot be in vain. And if the perusal of its pages quicken to self-examination and believing prayer the young, who are fancying themselves converted rather from negative than positive evidence—

rather from their doing no evil than their doing much if any good—rather from their own merits, than from personal union to, and interest in mediatorial righteousness—in that case there will be reason to rejoice that these lines have fallen to some ‘in pleasant places,’ and found for them a ‘goodly heritage.’ May God in mercy grant it!

Having remained for about three years in Longridge, Agnes returned to her native town in 1827, in every respect improved, except in the matter of health. She was received and welcomed into the house of her uncle, Dr Dewar, to be for some time under his professional care. Often did she bless God for such a friend, not merely because of his high and deserved eminence as a physician, but because of his affectionate and successful efforts, not only to benefit her health, but to inform and enrich her mind. He and her aunt were to her as father and mother, and to her dying hour did she hold them in her heart of hearts. They deserved, and they received her gratitude. She was truly a most thankful creature, and even to services of small importance she rendered warm returns.

CHAPTER IV.

The Farewells of Life.

‘My God, I would not long to see
My fate with curious eyes—
What gloomy lines are writ for me,
Or what bright scenes may rise.
Thy providence unfolds the book,
And makes thy counsels shine;
Each opening leaf and every stroke
Fulfil some deep design.’

WATTS.

FOR a time after Agnes' return to Dunfermline it was considered prudent to forbid severe application to her favourite branches of study. Her proficiency, indeed, in these respects was at least equal to what is usually deemed a solid education. But though it had not been so, the state of her health determined the question. Under the family roof of Dr and Mrs Dewar she was, besides, placed in circumstances alike favourable to bodily, intellectual, and religious improvement. The medical skill of her uncle, ere long, restored her to the enjoyment of ordinary health, while his accomplished mind, scientific and literary pursuits, and elegant taste, with which she every day came into

contact, kept alive within her the desire after knowledge, and greatly contributed to her mental riches and general information. None could be a better judge of what class of books were best fitted to furnish her with the most useful knowledge; and the intelligent conversation with which, in morning or evening hours, he uniformly improved his presence with his family, was an excellent addition to this domestic mode of enriching all who could appreciate and use the privilege. Her aunt, too, was in this same respect of great advantage to her. Of a soundly-educated and well-cultivated mind, with fine natural taste and hereditary talent, Mrs Dewar was admirably qualified to superintend the training of her interesting niece. Nor was it among the least of the advantages Agnes now enjoyed, that, while useful knowledge was here imparted, 'the most excellent knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ' was considered and enforced as of supreme worth. To her aunt, Agnes was deeply indebted for a fine exemplification of unostentatious piety, and a most judicious mode of teaching its principles, and directing attention to its temporal and eternal rewards. Of this she was very sensible, and spoke of her obligations when the only return she could make was to breathe most fervent prayers for a blessing on her and hers. That truly excellent lady, very soon after the death of Agnes, rejoined her in heaven. To her also was appointed a long course of suffering, endured with most touching re-

signation, and distinguished by the highest degree, if not of an assured certainty, of a strong and intellectual faith. Unlike her sister, (the mother of Agnes,) who died so triumphantly, Mrs Dewar met death with impressive solemnity, prepared for it with holy earnestness, and at last bowed her head to its stroke, TRUSTING. Let us be thankful that our acceptance with God at length does not depend on our triumphing, but on our *confiding* in the cross. It is nowhere written that they are blessed who *triumph*, but it is often written, 'Blessed is every one that *trusteth*.' The gospel of the matter is this, '*He who believeth shall be saved;*' and the Saviour himself admits that his disciples may be (not *should* be) of 'little faith;' nay, that there even may be faith of the size of 'a grain of mustard-seed.' Dying christians should therefore be taught to depend for comfort upon their *trust* in the atonement of Christ; and such comfort is of itself sufficient to impart that 'peace of God which passeth all understanding.'

Excepting occasional visits to Edinburgh, and part of a winter which she passed there, attending some of the higher branches of education, she sojourned during the most part of the interval between this and 1829 among her relatives in Dunfermline. Having recruited greatly in health, she about this time received and accepted a kind invitation to pay a visit to Mrs Abercrombie, wife of the late well-known author and

eminent physician, Dr John Abercrombie. Between that lady and Agnes' father a long and intimate friendship had existed. She was a native of Dunfermline, and had been brought up under the ministry of Dr Husband and Mr Macfarlane. Mrs Abercrombie and Mr Macfarlane corresponded frequently as friends, and this privilege he prized as one of his chief earthly enjoyments. She constituted him, while he lived, the almoner of her substantial charities to such aged and infirm servants of her deceased parents as had survived them, and stood in need of help; and whenever any painful case came in his way, he had only to apply to her, and he never applied in vain. After Mr Macfarlane's death, Mrs Abercrombie continued her regards for his family, and more especially interested herself in his daughter. During her sojourn in York Place, Agnes participated in the elegant and useful instructions which her own daughters were then receiving. She gained their respect, especially the sincere friendship of one of them, which was afterwards affectionately manifested at the bedside of the dying orphan. Of Dr Abercrombie's kind and valuable interest in her, there will be occasion afterwards to speak.

Having finished this visit, she entered the educational establishment of Miss White, Albany Street, Edinburgh, where she exerted herself to great advantage, and made rapid progress. She never forgot the kind attentions which she received, and remembered

the period of her residence in this seminary with cordial gratitude. This year's application in Edinburgh, however, again brought on a threatening of her former complaints, and she had to apply once more to her native air, and her kind physician. Her eldest brother had by this time taken up his residence in Dunfermline, and with him she resided for the greater part of 1830. It was now that the writer, for the first time since the family had quitted the manse, enjoyed her society. For six months there was between them uninterrupted intercourse, and, with the exception of the closing months of her existence, this was the most interesting period of his associations with her. Throughout that winter he was busily engaged in preparing for ordination to the christian ministry. To this event she looked forward with lively interest, as it was arranged that she should then take up her permanent abode with him in the manse of Kincardine. A gleam of hope now dawned upon her mind, that at length she should have a home to her content and at her command. The effect upon her spirits was most exhilarating. It formed the frequent topic of conversation during the long dark nights of that winter, and as the time of settlement there drew near, her tendency to sadness was apparently overcome. In her brother's preliminary studies and preparations for ordination she manifested the most affectionate concern, encouraging him by her happy anticipations, and aiding him in every way by which

she could alleviate the anxieties consequent upon such an important prospect. Conversation upon the sacred responsibilities of the pastoral office was not unfrequent, and but for what afterwards occurred, the frame of her mind might have been pronounced alike devotional and sanctified. With an occasional jocular remark on her sharing with him in some of the ministerial work of his expected charge, she did not conceal her deep earnestness in making herself acquainted with such duties as in that situation she might with propriety discharge. In this she was quite sincere. She looked forward with pleasure to such offices of love as superintending the Sabbath school, visiting the afflicted and mourning, and preparing all those delicate acts of female benevolence after which a generous nature pants.

There was one with whom at this time she held sweet intercourse, and for whom she cherished a sister's affection. Her brother in Dunfermline, with whom she lived, had recently been married, and for his amiable lady she at once prepared a place in her warm heart. Already, however, had 'the worm in the bud' appeared in her interesting sister-in-law. She was dying, and she knew it not. Agnes feared that an early grave was to be her appointment; and though she carefully concealed her apprehensions, she never omitted opportunities of commending religion as 'the one thing needful.' This was another school to which her heavenly Father sent her, that in it she might

learn such lessons as were after all to be required by herself on a death-bed, before they were practised by the object of her present solicitude. How beautiful and tender is the care of Providence! She thought of the soul of her sister, and was at the same time laying up treasure for her own. Agnes had lain in her grave only six weeks when her beloved companion was placed by her side. It was after a day and during a night of sore trouble, preceded by many days and nights of weariness, borne with much christian patience and meekness, that this young mother said, 'ALL MY HOPE IS IN JESUS,' and then calmly fell asleep in his bosom: 'They were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided.'

It has been noticed that Agnes was sometimes of a pensive habit of mind, which occasionally passed into a kind of melancholy, musing about herself and her future lot. Her trust in the God of her fathers was not yet of that calm and tranquil character which contributes to the peace of the fatherless; she was now and then tossed to and fro with fears about, not her spiritual, but her earthly lot; and as she was very reserved upon that subject, the state of her feelings imparted considerable thoughtfulness, and even an air of absence, to her otherwise winning and expressive face. Occasionally, however, in her letters to one of her brothers, she hinted at the subject, but always very delicately, though sufficiently intelligible to him.

‘I send you,’ she writes in one letter, ‘your gloves. They are as neat as I can make them, but a double seam never looks very well. I am sorry I have stuck *the drawing* which I was doing for you, and will be obliged to begin another. The faces are so small, I doubt if I will be able to catch the expression. I may make a pretty enough picture, however. I have never received the long letter you promised me. I think you might send it. I am just going off to Rew, to spend a few weeks with dear Isabella, at which I am very much delighted. She is the dearest friend I have on earth. I will tell you of my happiness when I return, though I may be disappointed in this expectation, *as I am in every other*. If I had only good health, I would be happy in being *independent*. I don’t think I ever can be happy otherwise. The Doctor thinks I may be quite clear of my complaints in a year or two. I sincerely hope so—*then* I may be happy!’ In another she writes, ‘I am astonished you never write to me. When I was at Longridge, you had fewer opportunities than now, and you wrote to me oftener. I can’t tell you how I weary to hear from you while here in Dunfermline; but you have always something or other to do rather than attend to me. I will never forget, however, the happy afternoons I have spent in your house in Howe Street. These were the happiest days I ever had, or, I dare say, ever shall have. How I would value an afternoon now, when I might have you for an hour or two to myself uninterrupted; but I need

not wish for what I cannot get. Yet I would feel happier if you would only write me oftener. Though I am a bad correspondent, you know not the pleasure I draw from your epistles, however short. Excuse this rhapsody; I cannot help it. I am inclined to throw it into the fire and write another, but I think it unfair to conceal even the thoughts of the moment from so near and dear a friend. Give my love to George and Andrew. *Kind love with me is not a thing of course; you must tell them.*'

From rather melancholy moods Agnes got entirely free when she found herself *at home* in the house of her friends. This was the case especially when she resided for any length of time at Rew, in Perthshire, where dwelt Mrs Gillespie, her cousin, and who had, from the day of her mother's death to that of her father's, taken the charge of the manse, and had, indeed, done all but a mother's part to the children of her venerated uncle. Here Agnes let loose all her natural flow of warm and generous feeling. The retirement of the place was a pleasing change to her, and its natural beauties were transcendently grand. The gorgeous scenery, indeed, which lay stretched out before her far and near, when she stood on the brow of the hill on which the farm-house of Rew is built, is scarcely to be equalled even in Perthshire. In the valley is to be seen and heard the rapid flow of the river Teith, unsurpassed in the Highlands for its picturesque course and shady banks. Immediately on

the right is the fine ruin of the castle of Doune, on which,

‘Dim with the mist of years,
Grey flits the shade of power,’—

in contrast with the sweet and tasteful church and manse of her own and her father's friend, Dr Mac-kerrow, of Bridge of Teith, which stand on the opposite side of the stream. In the far west appear the great and sublime outlines of the Trossachs, made immortal by the poetic genius of the author of the ‘Lady of the Lake.’ In the foreground, beyond the fair demesne of Blair Drummond, rises that wonder of the world, ‘a craig in a carse,’ the seat of the Craigforth family; slowly passing which is the river Forth, whose channel is there broadened and deepened by the tributaries of the Teith and Allan waters; while in the distance beyond are lifted up, in all their grandeur, the towers and battlements of the castle and town of Stirling. Many a time and oft she sat with her work or her book upon the table-land at Rew, and revelled in this grand and imposing panorama, drinking in those great and improving thoughts which spring from the devout contemplation of God as the Creator. She knew that his wisdom, and power, and goodness called all into being; but there is no proof that then she could say, ‘My Father made them all.’ In the dwelling at Rew, also, she had constantly before her one of the best specimens of the old Scotch Covenan-

ter, in the simple-minded but pious farmer, the husband of her cousin. She used to advert to his regular religious habits—austere enough some might think them—and made it her boast that, when the psalm to the good old tune of ‘Martyrs’ rose from his domestic altar with the rising orb of day, she made it her object to form one of the worshipping group even at such an early hour. Her family partialities, too, were pleasingly gratified by visiting, as she occasionally did, Erin, the birth-place of her father, and the scenes of his early life, which were all in the neighbourhood. Yes, at Rew she was indeed cheerful and even buoyant in spirits; and for this reason, so rare in her short life, the writer records her associations with it. This was her last visit to that lovely spot; and deeply did her kind friends who tenanted it, and all their household, feel her departure. Her absence created a blank which could not be supplied. As she drove off, the tear was in the eye of her ‘dear Isabella;’ and the somewhat *eirie* prayer of the venerable man was sent up for a blessing upon her from the ‘orphan’s stay.’

One lovely Sabbath morning in August of the same year (1831), a young lady, apparently in the bloom of health, was seen riding alone upon the high road between the sea-girt little town of Culross and Kincardine-upon-the-Forth. The sun, unclouded, cast his glowing beams upon the waters of that noble river. The fields were ripe unto the harvest. The merry lark was singing in the air. Nature, so profuse in

that romantic neighbourhood of all that can gratify the most fastidious lovers of her charms, seemed to the eye and ear of Piety to have assumed a gayer dress, and to have prepared her most bewitching music in homage to the hallowed day. The fair rider evidently enjoyed the scene ; and, as the sound of the first Sabbath bell rose from the old church spire far down upon the beach, and was wafted along the thickly-wooded and steep demesnes of the ancient Abbey of Culross, she was aroused from her meditations, and, giving the bridle to her pony, she fleetly galloped along the road, till she emerged from the woods that skirt the lands of Tulliallan Castle. Here she moderated her pace, and beheld in admiration the magnificent landscape that burst upon her view. At this part of the road there is a sudden and gradual descent to the village of Kin-cardine, and few can pass that way without being arrested for a while to survey the scene. Towards the south-west lies the fair carse of Falkirk, with its fertile fields and numerous mansions. The Forth here loses its appropriate term, 'the Frith,' and now assumes its river aspect. Gradually narrowing as the eye looks to the west, its waters are now seen in serpentine folds to roll in most picturesque windings among rich and cultivated plains, till they are lost behind the stately battlements of the castle of Stirling, and in the still more remote and sublime recesses where Benledi and Benlomond rear their cloud-kissing peaks. The whole panorama is closed

in upon the north by the beautiful and extensive range of the Ochil mountains, which only decline towards the vales of Perthshire to allow the rise and reign of the sterner Grampians. On another day, and with no instant care pressing upon her mind, the young equestrian could not have contented herself with a cursory glance over such a map of nature's glorious works. Her sketch-book would have been used to enrich its pages with the different views. She was, however, evidently occupied otherwise. Her eye rested on the village at her feet—it searched out one particular spot, where its church modestly rises above the humble dwellings of its inhabitants—and then and there a bright gleam of joy played over her expressive countenance, and up to heaven ascended a prayer, holy and fervent as ever passed from christian maiden's heart. The remaining mile was quickly coursed, and she entered the village.

The morning hymn has been sung, and the morning prayer has been offered within the dwelling of one of the pastors. He has retired to the garden, and in its sacred seclusion he ruminates the messages of mercy which are that day to be delivered to the flock, of whose souls, but a few months ago, he was solemnly ordained to be the shepherd and bishop. The work is as yet new to him, and laborious are his efforts to provide the weekly bread for his people, that they may 'grow in grace.' Unexpectedly, a servant announces to him that a lady on horseback is at

the gate. Surprised by such an unexpected and unwonted call, he leaves the garden, and is startled by the hearty salutations of his sister. It was Agnes! She had, during that summer, been residing with her aunt, Mrs Dewar, at Luscar House, a beautiful summer residence in Fifeshire, a few miles to the west of Dunfermline. Having ascertained that Kincardine was within an easy hour's ride, she had that morning resolved to worship in her brother's church. It was in vain that her aunt and others remonstrated with her not to go, or, if she must, not to go alone. Entreaty was useless; she had set her mind upon it, and before they were aware, she was mounted and away. It appeared to him strange then; it appeared to him stranger that day twelve months. It was her first, and it proved her last—her farewell visit to him. On the same day of August, in the following year, she died; and she had come but to look upon that anticipated home, and to hear for once in that sanctuary her brother's voice proclaiming the oracles of God. Had the veil been withdrawn, and the winding up of the year been disclosed, it would not have been for either of them such a happy occasion. The text and the subject of that afternoon's meditations sadly corresponded with the solemn work which a year afterwards was appointed to them both. The sermon was founded upon these words in Psalm xxxvii.: 'Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.' Though her

morning's ride had brought on a severe headache, she attended divine service forenoon and afternoon, and thus by a providential arrangement, she received warning and instruction against the day of her own decease. The evening of that Sabbath was appropriated to sacred reading and conversation; they thought and said to each other, that soon thus they should together be employed, and they regarded *this* as the forerunner and foretaste of many happy, holy days and evenings of the Lord in that beautiful place. It was not, however, all unmingled joy. Whether it was from the effects of her headache, or whether from some saddening anticipations of what was at hand, cannot be told, but as the evening advanced, she became pensive, and less disposed to converse. When silence was occasionally broken, the topics alluded to were the days of childhood, the dying scenes of parents, her subsequent homeless and often cheerless years, and the necessity of religion to a *peaceful* latter end. Upon this last subject she was more inclined to be a listener than a speaker; and her remarks were such as to reflect upon her own sincerity in making a christian profession. She retired early to rest, being somewhat overcome with the extra fatigues of the day. On the forenoon of Monday she took leave of the spot to which she expected ere long to return for permanent residence. Her brother accompanied her so far on the road towards Luscar House, and they parted. She had come to his manse according to a long promise; but her visit

was short, and it was never repeated. He remembers still his melancholy feelings as, from the heights above the village, he stood watching the progress of Agnes as she cantered along, occasionally turning round to salute him, till an abrupt turning in the road hid her from his view. What a mercy it is that we do not know 'what a day may bring forth!' How foolish, amid such an everlasting succession of vicissitudes, for sinful, mourning man to desire a vision of the future! Let him only have his wish for one moment, and speedily would he pray to have the impression effaced from his memory. Deep wisdom and boundless pity lie in these words of our Lord: 'Take therefore no thought of the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. SUFFICIENT UNTO THE DAY IS THE EVIL THEREOF.'*

Her abode at Luscar was a happy providence for Agnes. Her health was improved. As she daily rambled among its finely-wooded and undulating scenery, her spirits became joyful, and to all the *out* and *in*-door exercises of the country she devoted herself with unusual cheerfulness and vigour. It now seemed that her bodily infirmities had taken flight, and that a long season of good and even robust health was before her. The ruddy cheek, the mirthful eye, the elastic step, and the bounding air, told of restored and confirmed health; and oft did the clear and hearty laugh of the lovely maiden, as she gaily sported with her cousins

* See 'The Hiding Place,' chap. iv.

and their visitors among the trees of the neighbouring forest, proclaim that in her heart grief had no seat, nor sadness any sway. Upon the whole, these appearances were truthful. But she had, notwithstanding, her moments of foreboding even here, which, it may be, did not so entirely engage her mind upon the subject of vital religion as might have been wished, but which in some degree held within limits the exuberance and flow of her ardent temperament. A circumstance which deeply interested her partly accounted for this: One of her brothers had fallen into rather poor health, and had come to breathe the bracing air, and luxuriate in the fair scenery of Luscar. Between them there had been growing of late a very strong attachment. To his house in Edinburgh she had often resorted, when pursuing her education there—every Saturday, indeed, was passed under his roof. She had her will with him in everything, and his greatest delight was to scheme for her pleasure, and gratify her wishes. Delicacy perhaps forbids more, but the reader will excuse this much before he has finished the coming record. It was now her turn to enact the generous, and contribute to his pleasure. Anxiety about his recovery for a time cast a shade over her mind, which, however, disappeared as he became convalescent. In nursing him she had plenty of scope for the exercise of her kind and obliging disposition, and by her devoted and unceasing attentions she was deepening and confirming in his bosom an

affection which, ere many months had fled, was tested by his incessant vigilance at her own dying pillow. One of the favourite amusements at Luscar was music, of which she was rapturously fond, and in which she was a fair adept. To gratify him, she entered him as a pupil, and commenced to teach him to play some of her favourite airs on the piano. There was one in particular to which she had recently become very partial, and which she was almost every day either singing or playing. She insisted on his learning it first, nor did she resign her task till she had accomplished her object. Often since have these sweet lines, and the plaintive music to which they are set, been remembered in their associations with that summer at Luscar. They seem to be prophetic. The piece is entitled—

THE LAST LAY OF MARY STUART.

- ‘ From yon lone tower the midnight bell
 Sounds sad and heavily ;
And from his bower the screeching owl
 Sends forth a dreary cry.
- ‘ The night wind wails, and mocks each sigh
 That struggles from my breast ;
And Grief hath wept her fountains dry,
 And only death can give me rest.
- ‘ Soon I shall leave thee, land of sorrow ;
 Soon this fleeting earth resign.
Welcome orb that gilds the morrow,
 Thou wilt light me to my shrine.

‘Doomed by foes, by friends deserted,
 What can soothe my exiled breast—
 Where can flee the broken-hearted—
 Where the weary spirit rest?

‘Fare-thee-well, thou land of sorrow!
 Not with tears from thee I part;
 Not with thee bloomed love’s first flower,
 Though thou once possessed my heart.

‘For my wrongs let others chide thee,
 Since with me no hate can dwell.
 Soon the vault of death will hide me;
 Land of sorrow, fare-thee-well.’

We, creatures of a day, are oft sporting with misery when we think only of pastime or profit. In the cup of the flower we admire, there is poison—on the rose we smell, there is a thorn—in the glee we sing, there is the note of the coronach—in the smile that gladdens us, there is the shade of Death, and in the merry dance of life is heard the solemn tread of his equal foot. Truly ‘in the midst of life we are in death.’ ‘O that we were wise; that we understood this; that we would consider our latter end!’ Lord, teach us to ‘join trembling with our mirth.’ Whether any presentiment of what was approaching was upon her mind cannot be ascertained, but certainly such coincidences in her story are remarkable. Little did either of these two at that time consider the end of it all; for at that time, alas! little beyond the externals of religion engaged their thoughts. This was but one of the many songs with

which they beguiled the autumn eves in the drawing-room at Luscar:—

‘Of many a stanza, this alone
Has ’scaped oblivion—like the one
Stray fragment of a wreck, that, thrown
With the lost vessel’s name ashore,
Tells who they were that live no more.’

At the ‘fall of the leaf’ Agnes accompanied this brother to Edinburgh, to pass the winter in his house. She never had been so well in health or so comfortable in her feelings and hopes, and by the following spring she decided that she should make the manse of Kincardine her home.

Previously to her leaving Fifeshire at this time, she had taken the important step of connecting herself with the membership of the christian church. This was a matter which had given her for a long time serious concern—‘afraid to go forward lest she should go wrong,’ she had afflicted her spirit not a little as to the point of duty. She was well acquainted with the system of evangelical truth, and all her predilections were in favour of a public confession of the Saviour. She was unconscious of any scepticism tainting or stinting her creed; her character was as high as it could be for moral beauty, and not a little could be said in favour of her having felt the power of the truth in her heart and conscience. She was full of most amiable dispositions, the exercise of which

brought to her the blessing of the widow and the orphan. She was regular in private devotions—searched the scriptures daily—was oft in prayer, and she thought that she was glad when it was said unto her, ‘Let us go up unto the house of the Lord.’ Withal she had a desire to be in communion; she acknowledged the claims of the Saviour upon her heart, her hand, and life; and what more, it may be asked, was requisite? How many that are in external communion with the church have not one-half of her qualifications! True, lamentably true; but something far more important than all this was needed—her conversion to God had not as yet, according to her own subsequent testimony, taken place. In her heart much of the love of the world held sway, and her love to Christ was, as she said, a fancy, not a reality.’ The excellent clergyman,* however, to whom she made known her wish, was most conscientious in unfolding to her the nature and design of the holy ordinance of the Supper, as well as the kind and degree of that personal worthiness which was indispensably necessary to a true and proper fellowship in the sacrament. Agnes weighed the question long and prayerfully, and concluded that it was not her duty to delay until she had *assurance* of her reconciliation to God by faith in his Son. She therefore, for the first time, became a partaker of the Lord’s

* The Rev. John Law, of St Margaret’s Church, Dunfermline, now of Innerleithen, Peeblesshire.

Supper within St Margaret's Church, in her native town.

It is indeed most painful to be under the necessity of questioning the propriety of this step; but if her own personal convictions be the test, there are reasons for doing so. The language of a place at the Lord's table is this: 'I have decided for Christ. I have seen my need of him as a Saviour from the guilt, the condemnation, the love, the power, the miseries of sin. I have heard his kindly words, "*Come unto me,*" and I have come; "*Cast thy burden*" upon me, and I have cast it; "*Kiss me, the Son,*" and I have kissed him. Having taken this Saviour for my Saviour, I hereby avouch myself to be his servant and his property, and bind myself before all his people to take up his cross and follow him, and him only, all the days of my life.' Now, such language as this certainly implies, whether the communicant mean it or not, that he has been born again, that the great and saving change called 'the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost,' has actually taken place, and that the justifying righteousness of Jesus Christ, as the 'best robe,' has been brought forth, and, by the command of God, been '*put on.*' In every case of approach to the Lord's table, therefore, where this conversion has not been accomplished, the language quoted is either that of hypocrisy, or superstition, or ignorance, or formality. It can be *hypocritical*, and is so, when the

person knows it to be untrue; it can be *superstitious*, and is so, when the excitement of mere slavish fear leads to its adoption; it can be *ignorant*, and is so, when the proper ideas and responsibilities connected with its employment are not *before* because not *in* the mind; and it can be, and is *formal* when the prevailing motive to become thus externally connected with a church is just to be like other people, or, as it is said, '*to be in the fashion.*'

Such being the state of the argument, it is manifest that the step should never be taken by any who are not at least quite conscious that neither to formalism, nor ignorance, nor superstition, nor hypocrisy can their desire to communicate be ascribed; and there is no difficulty up to this point which an honest inquirer may not soon overcome. This, however, is a mere *negative* encouragement. Having reached comfortably this conclusion, the examination into *self* must take in a wider range of strictly religious experience. Such questions as Christ himself proposes cannot be considered extreme. The catechumen should be prepared to answer, in some measure *positively*, the following questions: 'Dost thou *believe* on the Son of God?' 'Lovest thou me?' 'Lovest thou me *more than these?*' And he should be willing, and *feel* himself prepared to comply with these cognate duties: 'Take up the cross and follow me:' 'Keep my commandments;' 'Do what I bid you:' 'Be not weary in well-doing;' 'Be steadfast and

immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord;' 'Crucify the flesh, with its lusts and affections;' 'Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world;' 'Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God;' 'Be faithful unto death;' 'Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase;' and, 'Go unto all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.'

How many thousands are there in the nominal membership of the churches of these lands, who cannot conscientiously answer such questions in the affirmative, and whose undisguised worldly life proves that the idea of conforming to such requirements is a stranger to their bosoms! There never was a more serious need than at present for inculcating upon men the great sin of unworthy communicating. It is difficult to say whether the almost simultaneous rush to the Lord's table, which characterises some quarters of the country, or the cold and studied neglect of the ordinance, which obtains in others, is the most lamentable state of things. In the one case, hypocrisy is at a premium in the church, and consequently the church is barren of the peaceable fruits of righteousness—multitudes cherish, and die, and are lost in mere self-delusion. In the other, spiritual death lies uncovered, and depraved human nature is not dressed up so as to deceive men into the idea of its having received the element of religion and the place of christian disciple-

ship—multitudes, therefore, are prevented from living in systematic contempt of the cross, and die, but not to be condemned for merely saying, ‘*Lord, Lord.*’ Their punishment must no doubt be dreadful, but their sin has not been so heinous and aggravated. In establishing, therefore, the proper test of a christian state, there is a propriety, on the one hand, in not demanding the unhesitating expression of our assurance, and, on the other, in not being lax in our admissions. By insisting on the first, many of God’s people are prevented from coming to the ordinance; and by practising the second, many who are not his people come only to profane it. The safe path is the middle one, into which it is highly probable we induce comparatively few formalists, and nearly all who have really believed, and from which, at the same time, we exclude none but those who have only a ‘name to live.’

BUT WHAT IS THIS MIDDLE PATH? The question is not only somewhat difficult to answer, but even when the path is observed and understood, there is great difficulty in getting into it. It is, in this respect, exactly like religion itself—it has a ‘strait gate’ and a ‘narrow way.’ For example, it tells us that, in order to be genuine believers, we must have the *knowledge* of christian truth, and the *assent of the mind* to that truth as divine; and then it tells us that this knowledge is not faith—that a man may know all about Christ, and not be in Christ—that he may be thoroughly acquainted with all Christ’s principles,

and be able, with glowing eloquence, to speak of his beauty, his love, and his grace, and yet be in the 'gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.' It tells us that a *confession* of the Lord Jesus with the mouth must be made, and at the same time warns us that such a confession is not faith—that profession is not principle—and that any man of ordinary tact may pawn himself on the church as a believer, and yet be no more of a christian than what the subscription with the pen or the word of the lip may make him ; and that all this may be the case when there is no intention to deceive, but only when the dangerous repose of formalism is indulged in. It tells us that the *heart and its affections* must be all moved towards and fixed on Christ, and then denies that the mere excitement of the feelings is a proof of the loving soul—that many natural men have been moved even to tears by the recital of the sufferings of the 'man of sorrows'—that as a well-told tale, or the spirit of romance working in the chapters of an interesting fiction, produces upon heated imaginations pathetic impressions—so may some be excited by the mere scenery of the gospel narrative, which, as it passes in its mysterious grandeur before their eyes, calls forth a sickly sentimentalism, without necessarily constraining them to identify themselves with what they hear, or appropriate to their own souls the atonement ; and that this faith, if faith it may be called, is only tantamount to the shifting interest wherewith the lovers of theatrical repre-

sentations witness the pompous shows of the immoral stage, and the suspicious illustrations of the histrionic art—just as Agrippa of old was ‘almost persuaded to be a christian,’ or as Felix trembled for the moment, under the stern and awful expositions of the great apostle. Now it is confessedly difficult to guide the inquiring mind, especially of young professors, through these incontrovertible positions, so as to discover to them their own true state and character. Yet such is plainly duty, and the MIDDLE PATH lies exactly in demanding that amount of christian knowledge which is necessary as the groundwork of saving faith, in connection with that degree of sacred *impression* which a humble but sincere inquirer must be conscious of, if true contrition for sin exists, and genuine confidence in Christ has been at all in exercise. It does not appear necessary to insist upon the necessity of the outward significations of a sober, righteous, and godly life; these are of course indispensable—not as certain proofs of the regenerated state, but as evidence that the profession made is not a palpable hoax. When tests of this class are applied by christian pastors, it seems to be their duty to act accordingly—to *admit* if they get the required satisfaction, to *reject* if they do not.

Tried by such a standard, it was right and proper that Agnes should have received the privilege of communion. No pastor could have been justified in doing otherwise in such a case as hers; for if ever charity

should have ample scope, it is with the *young* in her circumstances. True, to be lax and indiscriminate in judging, may tempt the young postulant to pawn a fatal deception upon himself; but to be rigid and over-scrupulous, may quench the kindling fire or crush the opening bud. How truthfully does the excellent Mr Adkins of Southampton represent this view, in his beautiful memorial of Miss Raitt!—‘Especially,’ he says, ‘is a scriptural participation of the Lord’s Supper beneficial to those who, in early life, yield themselves to God. The soldiers of Cæsar never felt themselves so determined to advance as when they had passed the Rubicon; and the youthful champion of the cross, having committed himself, by an overt act, to a great cause, feels that there is no alternative left to him but to go forward. He has put his hand to the plough, and he must not look back; he has lifted his hand to the Lord, and he cannot go back; the vows of the Lord are upon him, and what in others would be only an act of transgression, would in him be a species of sacrilege—the profanation of a sacred thing. These solemn considerations furnish him with weighty motives to holy vigilance, earnest prayer, and strenuous exertion: a visible line of demarcation being placed between him and the world, he is guarded against sinful conformity, debasing associations, and unscriptural alliances; and being planted early in the house of the Lord, he flourishes in the courts of our God.’*

* Memorial of Miss Henrietta C. Raitt, by Rev. T. Adkins, p. 59.

The winter months of 1831 and 1832 were for the most part spent by Agnes in her brother's house in Edinburgh. Her good health continued, and her heart appeared to be happy. She now enjoyed the society of those young ladies whose acquaintance she had made in the different boarding-schools she had attended, and who were resident in that metropolis. She also kept up an epistolary correspondence with others of them at a distance. What was the general character of her letters is unknown; but it is to be feared that the subject of religious experience did not occupy much (if any) space in them; more especially if the conjecture may rest upon the manner of her intercourse with her resident companions. It was in every respect amiable, affectionate, and elegant, but not at all decidedly or even distantly pious; and yet her young friends were all like herself, of known excellence and christian pretensions, and some of them of undeniable godliness, as we shall see. In examining such of her letters as still exist, we look in vain for those allusions and observations which mark the heart that is thoroughly devoted to God; and there are, here and there, hints which tempt the reader to wonder whether indeed she had become a child of God. For example: she had gone over to Fife to attend a ball which was held in Dunfermline about mid-winter, concerning which she writes—' We had a delightful party last night. I need not give you an account of it, as I can do that when I return. It was three o'clock in the

morning before we broke up, and I enjoyed myself very much ; indeed, we had delightful dancing.’ The letter from which this extract is taken is dated ‘*Sunday.*’ In another letter she says—‘Perhaps I might have persuaded you to take me to hear Kean the tragedian, which is my highest wish with regard to actors. If I could only see him once in tragedy, I would not care though I never entered the theatre again ; but I am very sorry that I have not that hope.’ The entire contents of another note to a friend are these :— ‘N.B.—*Nous allons au theatre ce soir.*’ Again : ‘Allow me to wish you many happy returns of the month of January. I was at a grand dinner party at Mr B——’s on Christmas-day ; and —— had a party of gentlemen on New-year’s-day. Give my kind love to John, George, and Andrew.’ Again : ‘I have returned from Largo, where I enjoyed myself very much, and went and saw the house where Robinson Crusoe was born, and his chest, and the cap which he made when in Juan Fernandez. It is a beautiful place.’ Again : ‘I really do not think I deserve the character of a gossip ; if I did, I might perhaps write you oftener and longer letters. But even though I were a gossip, *Dunfermline* gossip is not worth retailing. Every day passes alike here ; with me there is no variety, and therefore I have no news to communicate. But do you tell me in your next if there were any persons of my acquaintance at the Mireside affair, and what kind of a “set off” it was. You

must have heard of cousin John's death. James had a letter the night after, requesting some of us to go west to the funeral. It is very late, and I must close.'

In these and other letters, we search for, without finding, such plain and self-evident reflections as, to a mind but moderately engaged with religion, could not fail to have occurred; and though the references quoted are by no means of any importance in themselves, yet, as indicative of a spiritual idiosyncrasy, they are not without their value. Written about the time of declining health, of the death of relatives, of her becoming a member of the church, of the recurrence of seasons of the year when a pious mind is prone to solemn reflection, and addressed many of them to very intimate and sincerely religious friends, we regret their total barrenness of all serious references. Notwithstanding, it is proper to put in a caveat here, lest injustice be done to her. While it is and must be true that 'out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh,' it does not follow that every abundant heart must necessarily relieve itself by mere speech. Christian biography proves, by many fine illustrations, the very opposite. Constitutional *temperament* has a great deal to say even in judging of the work of the Spirit in the believer; in some, religion becomes transparent in the twinkling of an eye, and it sparkles in all they say and do; their very bodily members seem instinct with piety, so that what

was affirmed of the eloquence of Whitfield seems descriptive of their fervour—

‘Vividi vultus, vividi oculi, vividi manus, denique omnia vivida.’

But there are others who, retaining their original ‘natural turn,’ are shy and diffident upon the subject of their personal union with Christ, and rarely, if ever, introduce either it or kindred topics into conversation, whether written or oral. There are besides adventitious circumstances which in a great measure regulate one’s habits in this matter. If placed in the centre of a happy circle of beloved relatives, all eloquent of the Redeemer’s praise, and accustomed to season almost every conversation with the salt of his religion, the young disciple is more likely to be imbued with the same spirit; but if cast upon the world, and made to live among strangers, however good and kind, and denied the blessed advantage of a pious mother’s or even sister’s society, it ought not to be decided against the piety of the person if he or she become upon such a subject rather taciturn and retiring. It was thus with Agnes. And while we would be far, in the face of what she afterwards affirmed of herself, from insisting upon her having been at this time a truly regenerated person, neither would we rashly conclude that she was regardless of the ‘one thing needful.’ She was not. On the contrary, to all appearance, she walked as worthy of the christian profession she made,

as thousands of whose personal piety it would be sinful to entertain the smallest suspicion.

Agnes unquestionably was fond of society and amusements; and in this perhaps indicated more than in anything else her want of a decidedly pious heart. The metropolis afforded her abundance of both, and she did not hesitate to indulge herself when it was in her power to do so. There was, however, no excess of indulgence; she had the good sense, and we hope the good principle within her, which restrained her from even an approach to it. While enjoying herself vastly with many of her young friends who now participated with her in the delights of reunion, a check, which was felt to be of a very disagreeable nature, was put to her comfort and pleasures. This was occasioned by the post bringing to her one morning the following anonymous letter:—

‘MY DEAR MISS MACFARLANE,—Be wise and consider; perhaps the cholera may be ordained to strike you. Are you one who has believed on the Almighty Saviour, and to whom death has no terrors? Look into your own heart, and see if you can answer this question in the affirmative. If you can, you are happy. Even though the scourge should visit you, you have no reason to be alarmed. Jesus your Saviour ever liveth, and those who sleep in Him shall awake to behold his glory. Think of the friends you have now in glory; and O, what an awful thought to think of see-

ing those dear relations at the right hand of the Saviour, while you are on the left! You are doubtless the child of many prayers; you can say with the poet:—

“ My boast is not that I deduce my birth
From throned powers, and rulers of the earth.
No; higher still my fond pretensions rise—
The child of parents passed into the skies.”

And would you not wish to meet your parents in heaven, never to be parted? You are an orphan, but if God is your Father, what have you to fear? Seek above all things to secure your interest in Jesus; without this all that earth can bestow is utterly un-availing.

‘Excuse the plainness of these few remarks, and believe me your sincere, though unknown, well-wisher.’

For two or three weeks this letter annoyed her exceedingly. She was irritated at it. She was angry at it. She guessed over and over again who the writer might be—very properly condemned the practice of writing anonymous letters—hoped she would discover the writer—and at all events, in the meantime she would try to banish from her thoughts the disagreeable feelings it had occasioned. It is doubtful if she succeeded in this. It ever and anon came athwart her vision, and remained, as the handwriting on the wall of Belshazzar’s palace, to inculcate moderation and seriousness.

Agnes, at this period, evidently belonged to that class of young and well-educated females, to whom the epithet *romantic* is, in the sense least offensive, applicable; not that in her mental constitution there was any excess of those vain thoughts by which the class is distinguished, but that, in all likelihood unknown to herself, she was the willing victim of a morbid sentimentalism. Thus, she took somewhat discoloured views of life; and though very far from entertaining improper opinions upon the subject of religion, she certainly had not yet discerned it to be that pure and spiritual thing which it really is. She was never heard to utter one word that could disparage it, though she did not hesitate, as occasion offered, to characterise as *pharisaical* a good deal of what passed current for genuine piety. Hence some might, and perhaps some did, consider her own sincerity in the matter rather questionable. But, to use the language of one of her most beloved and intimate friends—‘Agnes was no hypocrite. She often dared think aloud, when others more cunning were silent; thus drawing censure upon herself, while they escaped. Though sometimes tempted by the world’s gay flowers to deviate from the “narrow way,” she never plucked them in peace of mind.’ With regard to her religious *experience*, some time before her last illness commenced, the same lady thus writes: ‘I remarked that a long time before her death she did not enjoy *peace* in believing. I

remember that on the evening of one communion Sabbath in Bristo Church, Agnes and I retired after dinner to a room by ourselves. She unbosomed herself to me. She told me that she was far from being happy, and that one cause of her unhappiness was, that she had not felt at liberty to communicate that day, from having been of late too gay and worldly-minded. In the course of conversation she said: "Is it not a solemn thing to think, that if we are not elected we cannot be saved?" I did not know well what to reply, but answered just as I felt, that we did not know but that we might be elected; and at all events, that even though we were not saved at last, the happiest life to lead in this world was the *christian* one. I shall not easily forget her abrupt and bright look when, after some conversation, she said, "Jane, you have made me happy again; and if I should become unhappy, the thought of this moment will restore me." I have often thought that novel-reading took away her peace of mind. Naturally clever, romantic, nay even enthusiastic, no wonder though such food made her exclaim one day, "I think I was born for something else than what I am!" During the last months of Agnes's life I was in Wiltshire. She sent me several messages, and the last one was an expression of "her hope that we should meet again in a better land." *

It has been noticed that during this winter's re-

* Letter to the Author from Mrs K——.

sidence in Edinburgh she went across to Dunfermline to be present at a ball. This was her last visit to Fife. To what it is to be traced, it is difficult to say, but it was noticed that she was unusually sad. In one house especially, she remarked to the lady as she was leaving—

‘Mrs B——, farewell: it is probable that I may never return to Dunfermline in life.’

‘If you do return,’ said Mrs B——, ‘I hope you will not be such a stranger here as you have been.’

‘I will not,’ she replied, ‘*if God spare me.*’

‘It is not usual for you, Miss Macfarlane,’ rejoined Mrs B——, ‘to express yourself in this serious and guarded manner.’

‘That may be so,’ she resumed, ‘but we should always so speak when anticipating futurity.’

Her words were prophetic—she was brought back in the sable hearse.

The writer has a vivid recollection of his sister and her demeanour during this visit to their native town. She apprised him of her intention to spend a few days there, and invited him to meet with her. The time was chiefly occupied in making calls on old family friends, and in short excursions to the neighbourhood. They visited their old familiar haunts, and spent a portion of the last afternoon in the beautiful grounds of Pittencrieff,* and the adjacent abbey, with its churchyard. In the latter they remained a

* Seat of James Hunt, Esq.

long while meditating and conversing among the tombs of their kindred. Her cast of mind during the day and the evening was decidedly melancholy. She looked as if burdened with some heavy thought, and she talked as if some presentiments of what was at hand had taken possession of her mind. Early in the morning of the following day—it was a cold, rainy, and dismal December morning—they left Dunfermline together. The stage coach had scarcely passed the suburbs of the town when Agnes became suddenly sick. Notwithstanding the uncomfortable state of the weather, she was obliged to leave the interior to take her seat on the outside. This afforded her an opportunity of getting her farewell look at the town, and of viewing all the well-known scenery between Dunfermline and Edinburgh. Of that portion of it lying between South Queensferry and the metropolis, she was much enamoured, and bleak and wintry though nature looked, she noticed and chatted about its numerous picturesque charms. At any season of the year, indeed, the scenery at this part of the great north road is singularly fine. From the high ground immediately above the small seaport town which takes its name from the ferry, there opens upon the view to the westward a most magnificent panorama. The traveller looks down upon the ample waters of the broad-bosomed Forth, stretching upwards to its source among the mountains, separating the great lochs of Lomond and Katrine, and east-

ward towards the German Ocean, into which its waters are delivered. There is one peculiarity in the scene which readily arrests attention—the quick narrowing of the Forth immediately underneath, from a breadth above and below of five or six miles to scarcely two miles. This is the famous ferry already referred to, which connects the north and the south of Scotland, and which takes its name from the historical tradition that Queen Margaret, the tutelary saint of Dunfermline, was accustomed to be ferried across at this spot, on her way to and from her palace in Fife. In the centre of this *strait* is to be seen a small turreted island, which in ancient times protected by its battery the passage; a little further up, and on the north coast, rises the venerable ruins of Rosyth Castle, whither sometimes fled for safety the unfortunate Mary Queen of Scots; while a few miles to the north, upon a rising eminence, stands the ancient town of Dunfermline, with its abbey towers and spires, and wide-spread dwellings. Leaving this part of the road behind him, the traveller passes on through the finely-wooded possessions of the lordship of Roseberry, and crossing the Cramond Bridge, next enters upon the extensive domains of Barnton. As he approaches the capital, his attention is called to a romantic residence on the right hand side of the road, beautifully situated at the bottom of the hill. This is the Castle of Craigerook, the property of the late distinguished Lord Jeffrey. When enjoying this view

of the classic retreat of the great critic, it was not unusual for Agnes and her friends to express their wonder if a being of such fine taste and elegant mind should be permitted to enter upon eternity without undergoing the *one great change*—the second birth—without which no man can enter the kingdom of heaven. Jeffrey has by this time discovered for himself the awful secret. The city which he so long adorned with his brilliant genius now weeps over his grave, and good men think to themselves, ‘Can his soul be saved?’*

Almost immediately after her return to Edinburgh at this time, Agnes was taken ill of cold. She had been out at an evening party, and was for such an occasion it may be, but not for the state of the weather and her own safety, appropriately dressed. She began to complain in the month of February, 1832. Her physician treated her for a rheumatic affection, which in a great measure left her, only, however, to return

* It has been whispered that Lord Jeffrey did not reject evangelical truth in his latter days; but that, like his illustrious friend, Sir James Mackintosh, he looked at the cross. Whether this was a look from the eye of faith, must remain a secret until ‘that day.’ The biographer of Sir James informs us, that as his soul was departing he refused to utter any other name than that of JESUS, and expired as he pronounced it. It may be recorded in honour of Jeffrey, that one of the last acts of his life was the transmission of a handsome donation to the testimonial fund on behalf of the venerable Dr Thomson of Coldstream, to whom the church and the world are laid under the greatest obligations for his indefatigable, disinterested, and triumphant exertions in the cause of bible emancipation.

with considerable violence in the following month. She then entered that chamber, and was laid down upon that bed of weariness and suffering, which she never left till carried out in her coffin.

Christian reader, — If you have accompanied the writer thus far, you must have noticed his efforts to keep himself out of view. He can do so no longer. One thing he has continued to regret for these eighteen years, namely, that he, and not some other, had been appointed to watch at that bedside of sore distress, and to wait in that chamber of conflict. A dislike to publish so much wherein he himself must of necessity appear so prominently, has, during that time, led him to resist many strong applications from very excellent quarters, to give to the world the manuscript from which the following memorials are to be drawn. That dislike is not overcome. It is stronger than ever; but his resistance has yielded to a sense of duty. Scarcely another line can be written if he withdraws himself from the scene, so constantly and seriously was he mixed up with the sequel of the story of his sister. He feels, however, that the employment of the *third* person could not disguise the individual, while it would encumber the style and take from the interest of the Memoir. For these reasons, which principally affect the reader's gratification in its perusal, he would now respectfully request permission to write in the *first* person, promising that it will be his endeavour to watch against any unwarranted intrusion. He would

only further remark, before he begins the narrative of the means by which the spiritual darkness of his sister was dispelled, that so far as he knows and can remember, what is to be told is not only true, but fails to convey one tithe of the interest with which this sick-bed scene was throughout invested. His prayer he again lifts up to heaven that the reader, especially if she be a young lady in the hey-day of health and hope, may rise from the review of these exercises, glorifying God for such a warning to make religion the business *of life*, and to regard the dying hour, whensoever it may come, as the signal for victory, not for combat.

‘Who that bears

A human bosom, hath not often felt
 How dear are all those ties which bind our race
 In gentleness together, and how sweet their force,
 Let fortune’s wayward hand the while
 Be kind or cruel? Ask the faithful youth,
 Why the cold urn of her whom he long loved
 So often fills his arms, so often draws
 His lonely footsteps, silent and unseu,
 To pay the mournful tribute of his tears?
 O, he will tell thee that the wealth of worlds
 Should ne’er seduce his bosom to forego
 Those sacred hours, when stealing from the noise
 Of care and envy, sweet remembrance sooths,
 With virtue’s kindest looks, his aching breast,
 And turns his tears to rapture.’

AKENSIDE.

CHAPTER V.

The Valley of the Shadow of Death entered.

'The Bible! This sacred ray of light,
This lamp from off the everlasting throne,
Mercy took down, and, in the night of Time,
Stood, casting o'er the dark her gracious bow.'

POLLOK.

HAVING heard that Agnes was now so ill as to be constantly confined to her own chamber, I felt somewhat anxious. It was my *first* feeling of the kind on her account. For many years, we had enjoyed each other's society but seldom; but fraternal attachment had become stronger and more devoted by successive opportunities of observing her many virtues, and sympathising with her in all her little and peculiar trials. Besides, she had made her arrangements, and had already forwarded some of her articles to Kincardine, preparatory to her taking up a permanent abode with me in the manse. The time was now past upon which we had agreed that she should be with me, when she paid me that melancholy visit in the previous autumn; and I felt disappointed. Under the impression that this should be a mere temporary ailment, and hoping

to induce her to return with me to the country, I went to Edinburgh in the beginning of April. It was late in the evening when I arrived, and, with no great solicitude upon my mind, I at once entered the bedroom where she lay. She welcomed me with a sweet, a most impressively peculiar smile; but I was taken by surprise. I had seen her, only a few weeks before, in this same dwelling presiding over an evening party of young friends, in all the joyousness of health and happiness. The long dark hair, the deep blue eye, the expression so full of thought, and the winning artlessness of her entire manner, so indicative of the accomplished and well-regulated mind, were still imaged within me, and hence the shock that followed what I now saw—the face deadly pale, the eye dull, the expression painful, and the figure stretched out upon a bed of trouble. Though enjoying at the time what she was accustomed to call a ‘moment of ease,’ she could not be moved, nor even touched without suffering much pain, and occasionally the chamber rang again with her scream. Nothing of importance passed between us; no particular religious exercises were engaged in, excepting some ordinary allusions to the design of God in chastening his children. The subject of death was neither now, nor for weeks to come, before either of our minds. The idea that this dear sister was on her death-bed never for one moment occurred to me; and I am persuaded that it was not associated in her mind with her present illness.

I returned to see her in two weeks after this, and found her much in the same condition. When free from attacks of pain, she was lively, patient, and full of hope that soon all should be well, and that she would get away with me to the country.

I left her equally hopeful. I paid her a third visit in May, having gone to Edinburgh to supply for my friend Dr William Peddie. I went early in the week, and was much oftener at her bedside. On Wednesday evening she seemed easier than usual, and disposed to converse. I cannot remember whether or not religion was introduced; but as she knew I was to officiate next day in Bristo Church, she asked me to read to her the sermon I intended to preach. I did so. She became uneasy before I had finished, but insisted on hearing it to the close, when she remarked that she regretted much being deprived of the public ordinances of christianity, and evidently longed for the return of health, that she might 'go up again to the house of the Lord.' She then made me promise that I would pass the afternoon of the next day—which was to be the *Fast-day* in Edinburgh—alone with her, when the rest of the family should be at church. I promised; and, after having preached in the forenoon, I hastened over to Howe Street. I found, however, that she was incapable of attending to any lengthened exercise. She had stipulated for another sermon, and I began to read one; but the drowsiness induced by a sleepless night, and not a

little suffering, prevented her attending to me. She was disturbed in her sleep every now and then by a sensation of thirst, when she called for water; and, from her muttering during slumber, it was evident that it was by no means a refreshing one. I left her again on the following day, as yet totally unalarmed about her, and she herself apparently as confident as ever of being soon well.

But the hour of our being undeceived at length came. Delicacy forbids that its peculiar agonies be disclosed. She had been too much idolised by her brothers. They had allowed their affections to blind them. In the midst of their pride and in the power of their love for their only sister, but recently settled down amongst them in the bloom and beauty of womanhood, and with all the graces and gifts of a polite and sound education, they had never contemplated the possibility of such a thing as death coming to cut her down, and carry her away to the land of forgetfulness. It is not to be wondered at, if at the first, and for a long while afterwards, the very thought was repulsive, and not to be entertained; but *now*, even while Hope did her utmost to foster and sustain the opposite conclusion, the death-blight of fear had fallen upon them; and though they assumed a careless, and easy, and confident air in her presence, they saw it in each other that they were only *actors*. But how was the spell broken?

It was about two weeks from my third visit that I

paid her a fourth. I found her not much worse, but evidently no better. Her sufferings from pain and restlessness—from sleepless nights and wearisome days—were truly great, and borne with even cheerful patience. Now, however, I saw she was getting somewhat concerned about the probable *length* of her illness—not the *issue* of it; and one morning when her attentive and kind physician, the late well-known Dr Abercrombie, called, I resolved to venture upon the question of his own opinion on the case. His reply placed me in an entirely new world of feeling and fear. He said—‘*There is very much reason for anxiety.*’ This was the first blow of a heavy and overwhelming idea—it overpowered us. The conception of her death, however, was too large to be admitted all at once. It was a new study—we were bewildered—young and inexperienced, and not sublimely pious, we could not believe it possible. When Dr Abercrombie left, I felt that I must enter her chamber in another character—to waken her out of a dream of life which was not to be realised—and summon her to a reality of preparing for eternity, which was all as yet to begin. But how to strike down that hope—how to undermine that strong natural love of life, and how to persuade that happy, sanguine girl to be resigned to meet and combat with the king of terrors—were exercises from which at first human nature shrunk. On entering the room, I was nearly mastered by the gush of pity which

arose from the deep, deep sea of love within me, and I tried to conceal my face from her view. In a little while I had got the command, and ventured near her.

‘What is the matter with you?’ she asked. ‘You look very melancholy.’

‘It is my sympathy with you,’ I replied; ‘’tis no wonder if I get dull sometimes.’

The subject of conversation was then changed,—nothing further was done. The ordinary topics of religion were introduced, and even death might be spoken about, but in such a general way as to give her no key to our secret about herself. Efforts towards mootng to her the probability of her dying were made, and they all failed. Whatever were our exercises in the closet and on our knees, there were none appropriate to her state in her presence. I left her thus, on the confines of an eternal world, as I feared, but without the slightest idea on her part that there was danger in her case. I trembled to tell her, lest it should be the means of hastening her death, so conscious was I of the firm hold that life and the world had of her heart. Hearing that she had rather improved in the interval, four weeks passed away after this without my seeing her. I had conceived that the responsibility of breaking to her the subject of her critical condition properly devolved on her brother in whose house she was, and but too glad to escape from the duty, I entreated him to do so, and believed that he would. But it was not done.

Four weeks passed away from this visit before I saw Agnes again. She had been rather better, and professional engagements put it out of my power to go to Edinburgh. I had lost, in a great measure, the anxiety occasioned by Dr Abercrombie's remark, and was even hoping that the worst was over. It was in a beautiful evening in the middle of June that I returned to Kincardine from Stirling, where I had been assisting the venerable successor of Ebenezer Erskine at the dispensation of the Lord's Supper. Among the letters awaiting me was one from Edinburgh, stating that Agnes had been worse than ever—that Dr Abercrombie had given up all hope of her recovery—that she was dying—that she knew it not—that she must be told, and that I must tell her. These were sad news, and it were not easy to describe the state of mind in which, on the afternoon of the 25th of June, I sailed down the Forth towards the city where she lay. A brother came down to meet me on arriving at Newhaven, and prepared me for what I was so soon to witness. On reaching Howe Street, I remained an hour in the adjacent room before I had courage to enter hers. Commiseration with her dreadful sufferings—sorrow for her early doom—agony to know that she was actually dying, and knew nothing of it, and an overwhelming anxiety about her soul's salvation, all combined to indispose and unfit me for seeing her. Besides, I now felt that the secret must be disclosed, and that I must do it. How would it confound her?

How would she receive it? Would it drive her to terror and despair, and would she die uncomforted and unresigned? were most distressing questions, and demanded instant replies. Once and again I resolved to employ some other friend to break the affecting truth to her, and as often fell back upon the thought that it might be merciful to withhold it from her altogether. In this unsettled and oppressive state of feeling I at last yielded to entreaty, and entered her room and looked upon her; but what a change was there which these few weeks had produced! Distress of body and solicitude of mind had written deep their characters on every feature of her face. I had to hide from her view its overpowering effects. Very languid, most melting was the smile with which she tried to greet me, as I pressed her pale hand in mine, and sat down at her bedside to begin the sad and solemn work of preparing her soul for eternity.

It is confessedly both a delicate and painful duty to break the subject of death to the dying, and especially to a dying maiden. This, however, is a duty to which ministers of religion are frequently called, and they ought to be qualified for discharging it in such a way as not to sink faithfulness in mere tender regard for natural feeling. In general, inexperienced ministers are under the fear that the announcement may produce disastrous results; but when properly and prayerfully gone about, it never does so. When the person is under the influence of divine grace, the Spirit of

God is beforehand with the instrument, so that the composure with which the intelligence is received, makes it appear as if there had been not only the anticipation of but preparation for it. There are no cases on record of the performance of this duty overwhelming the dying. And even though the patient may have been careless and unbelieving, the fulness of the awful premonition does not come forth with such entireness and power as to be realised. Followed up, in either case, by wise, affectionate, and prudent counsels, it is probable that the most happy results will reward the honest discharge of the duty. There are many who, from a false affection, would hide the truth from the dying, and allow them to pass into judgment wholly unconscious of their danger. This is cruelty of the worst kind, and cannot be too strongly reprobated. If ever the christian pastor have it in his power to perform an act of genuine kindness, it is when, finding this to be the case, he determines, on his own responsibility, to act consistently with the serious necessities of the case. If he do so, he may rest assured that the Lord will not only strengthen him for his duty, but bless him in its discharge, and at the same time give him reason to rejoice in the success of his service to the immortal being whom he would guide safely to 'the land of uprightness.' Such were the happy consequences when at length the chapter of her approaching death was opened and read to Agnes. As nearly as the writer can remember, the following were sub-

stantially the terms in which at this time he addressed her :—

‘My dear Agnes,—What a blessing it is, that, though you have been such a sufferer, your mind is able to engage itself with the comfortable subjects of religion. You know that all affliction is sent to *sanc-tify* God’s people. None of them, even the best, are free of sin in this life ; and hence it is an affecting proof of God’s fatherly love to them, when he casts them into the furnace to purify and prepare them for being more useful here, and for entering heaven when they die. It does not follow, however, that severe illness *must* end in death ; for very often it is sent the better to qualify his servants for the duties which await them in this world. Still, we should always connect trials with sin as their cause, and with the abandonment of sin as their designed effect, in order that, being led unto repentance and faith, we may die at last “meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.”’

To this exordium she sweetly assented, but silently. I continued :—

‘Your prolonged affliction is certainly designed to lead you to repentance ; and you are not your own friend if you do not make conscience-work of looking into your past life, and into your very heart, that you may thereby see your sinfulness, confess, believe, and be forgiven. You do not need to be told what evangelical repentance is, neither is it necessary to tell you

where to go for pardon. Your mind has been long familiar with the gospel story, and the name of Jesus is sweet to you—sweeter far than any other that can be named either in heaven or upon earth. I hope God has many days of usefulness for you here; and your duty is to improve this illness, by daily imploring him, like the patriarch of old, to “show you why he contends with you;” and even though it should be his will to take you away, you will, by such exercises, be prepared to bow your head to that will, and say, “The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?”

She continued to look with increasing interest upon me as I proceeded, making me feel as if she suspected my fears, and wished to read my inmost mind. This threw me off my guard, and I at once entered upon a more general mode of conversation, opening up to her the plan of salvation, extolling the love of the Saviour, and exhibiting the safety of those who trust with all their hearts in his all-sufficient righteousness. The interview lasted half an hour; and when I ceased speaking, and rose to leave the room, she expressed herself as ‘having been much comforted with what I had spoken’—adding to her nurse as I retired, ‘I am greatly delighted with what he has been saying.’ This was encouraging. I returned shortly to bid her good night. Having engaged with her in prayer, she drew me towards her. I listened anxiously:—

‘I wish to say something: you have thanked God

for what you called the patience and resignation with which I am enduring my trouble. You ought not to have done so. I am not patient. O how often do I murmur and forget altogether to thank Him for my moments of ease from suffering!

This was her own meek estimate, but it was not correct; all along her quiet and gentle submission was one of the most fascinating features in her character. A murmur, even when most beset with pain, was never heard. Every one saw her patience but herself. She even already had begun to veil herself in humility. On this occasion she took no alarm. The room was not lighted—and the shades of twilight served to hide my emotions from her. But for this, she could not have failed to have concluded rightly as to my intention in thus addressing her.

JUNE 26, TUESDAY.—Agnes was visited to-day by her aunt, Mrs Dewar, and her oldest brother from Dunfermline. They were both disappointed that she was still unapprised of her real condition; and after some conversation, the duty of doing so was again devolved upon me. I consented to make a second attempt, but requested that I should be left alone with her. Having sought the divine aid, I entered her room, shut the door, and seated myself towards the foot of the bed. Her first look seemed to implore me not to pronounce the sentence, and for a few seconds not a single word passed between us. At length *I took the Bible*, determined that from this moment she should be

warned, strengthened, comforted, and enlightened out of its precious pages. She was in the dark valley, and knew it not, and I thought that the shining of this LAMP within her chamber might, in the first place, make her sensible, by contrast, of the surrounding gloom, and also anxious to see the way through the shadowy vale. Into many a dark and dismal passage did she afterwards draw me while in combat with her unbelief and terrors; but as I made it a point ever to carry the Bible with me, we had always light, and light that never led astray. There is no plan of addressing anxious inquirers, especially if dying, so sure to succeed as this. The Spirit of God is certain to honour and bless his own word. And if parents or pastors desire, when there is need for it, to do the most invaluable service to their afflicted children and people, they will trust less to their own sympathetic encouragements, and more to God's wonderful testimonies, alike for the conversion and the confirmation of the soul. From this moment to the hour of her dissolution, Agnes was never left without this divine light in her room. Her day of life was almost spent, and her nights of death had suddenly set in; but she found in consequence that in the evening hour there was light, and that the illumination of her path came from 'the word of God.' No doubt she read many good, holy books of prose and poetry when on her death-bed; but these were all regarded by her as subsidiary to her Father's merciful

revelation. The Bible, the precious Bible was 'the man of her counsel,' and the guide of her spirit as she steadily brought up her mind to the full realisation of her death, and to its ultimate triumph over the natural repugnance to submit to its stroke. I began thus :

'We are alone, Agnes, and here is the Bible ; may I read a portion of it ?'

'I will be obliged if you do ; select for me,' she answered.

I purposely selected, for the sake of the *fourth* verse, the twenty-third Psalm. Like most children of pious parents in Scotland, that psalm was the first her infant lips had lisped, and she was familiar with it. I thought she might the more easily reproduce and meditate on its charming truths, by having her attention specially and solemnly fixed upon it ; we are so apt to disregard those scriptures with which we have been longest and most familiar, forgetting that this very familiarity proves them to be super-excellent. I had much ease in unveiling to her the beautiful character of the Lord Jesus as the shepherd of the sheep, and of explaining and enforcing the confidence which every one of them is warranted to express in his care and bounty, both now and in future. As I discoursed to her of 'the green pastures' of his covenant engagements, and rich promises, and nourishing doctrines, and of the sweet and tranquillising influences of his Holy Spirit, when 'the still waters' of his love and peace are poured out upon the thirsty soul, she seemed to forget that she

was a sufferer. When I pointed out to her the natural alienation of the heart from God, and told her of the far, far away country to which the prodigal son had wandered, and explained that none but this divine Shepherd could reconcile that heart to God, and bring back that soul to his favour and his home, she became still more absorbed in the startling theme. But when I entered the 'valley of the shadow of death,' and discoursed of its rough and crooked path, its lonesome, cheerless region, and its many terrific visitations from the accusing conscience, the ensnaring fiends, and the dens of unbelief, she became uneasy—paler she could scarce be—and her eye was restless, and her expression painful; nor did the subsequent consolation of the psalmist, from his assurance of the Shepherd's presence and protection, allay the discomposure, or recall her self-command. I thought that *now* was God's 'accepted time;' and just as if the thought had only struck me, I asked her this question:—

'By the way, Agnes, do you ever meditate on death? Do you ever look to it as the probable issue of your present illness? Do you ever really set yourself to prepare for it?'

'No,' was the short, instant, emphatic reply; but it was not the reply, it was the deep-searching look that accompanied it, which almost drove me again from my purpose. I proceeded—

'It is, notwithstanding, your duty to do so. There is great wisdom in being prepared for death, even when

in health, how much more so when under severe affliction like yours?’

‘It is true,’ she said, ‘but I am not at all so ill as you seem to think.’

‘But you know, Agnes, that the issue of affliction is very doubtful, and especially when it is protracted and severe.’

She gazed upon me with a look of intense anxiety, and exclaimed, ‘O my dear brother!’ She then burst into tears. I wept with her. I closed the holy volume, I had not the heart to proceed. I said—

‘I see I am distressing you, Agnes, and I will desist.’

‘No, no, no,’ she cried. ‘What are you here for but to comfort me?’

General allusions again followed this scene. She suspected something, but seemed afraid to allow all hope of life to be dashed from her, by the expression of my mind in her presence. She kept a most watchful look upon me whenever I opened my mouth to speak, as if she were determined to put it out of my power to disclose the truth. Ere I left the room, I asked—

‘Do you feel quite safe in the prospect of death?’

‘No, I DO NOT,’ she answered; and again she broke out into weeping.

‘What is the reason? Are you afraid of death?’

‘I am; because I have a wicked and unsubdued heart. I have not yet believed, and have been a very

disobedient child; besides, there are many things about religion which I do not understand, and which trouble me.'

I then set myself to find out the source of her inward fears; but it is impossible to transcribe them in full, or my replies, either in refutation of harassing doubts, or in confirmation of her hopes in the divine mercy. She spoke and felt as if she were both a believer and an unbeliever. From what seemed to be her faith she got little comfort, while that which was her unbelief sometimes threatened to make shipwreck both of her principles and of her peace. The Bible, however, was received by her as the only rule of a sinner's faith and manners; and even in the loftiest outbursts of poetical admiration of its value, she felt a pure and stirring sympathy. With Pollok himself she could have vied in the depth of that veneration which thus extolled the sacred book:—

'The Bible!

Most wondrous book! bright candle of the Lord!
 Star of Eternity! the only star
 By which the bark of man could navigate
 The sea of life, and gain the coast of bliss
 Securely—only star which rose on time!'

Agnes had never been, in the strict sense of the word, a *sceptic*. Under such training as she had received, this was scarcely possible. From the dawning of her reason the beauties of piety had been before her eyes, and the principles of christianity instilled

into her mind. She certainly had not, from that period upwards, been under the saving influences of our holy faith. She had not given evidence of sanctification from the womb, though from a child she had known and well known the holy scriptures. But she never knew what the sentiment of scorn was for the precious truths of revelation. Before the awful mysteries of the Bible she no doubt sometimes trembled and was perplexed; but she never, in the pride of a weak intellect, affected to despise them. Her profession was always orthodox or evangelical; and her prejudices were even decidedly in favour of that form of sound words which from her youth she had been taught. It cannot be denied that one may have *unbelief*, and yet not be an *infidel*. Infidelity is a rejection of christianity as of divine authority. Unbelief is the want of that appropriating faith in the atonement of Jesus which God has made indispensable to the pardon of sin here and life everlasting hereafter. It is to the credit of religiously-educated young females, that seldom, if ever, does one instance of *infidelity* occur amongst them. So abhorrent, indeed, even to female propriety and decency, does such a sin appear, that it is rarely known, even among those who have not had what is termed an evangelical or religious upbringing. A male infidel is certainly a pitiful being—a female scorner, however, is unspeakably more so; and if there be a case in which the very quintessence of compassion works in the

breasts of the truly pious, it is when a young lady, who has had the advantages of a christian nurture, and an elegant education, assumes the coarse and forbidding airs of masculine freethinking, in obedience to the lowest grade of vanity and self-conceit. Pampered she may be by the compliments of unlettered but deceitful fops, who uniformly have as little of brain as they have of principle; but from that moment she is shunned by the truly good as a leprous or unsightly object; latterly even the scorner himself eschews her; and, for all that he acknowledges not any faith in the distinctive doctrines of Christ, he would not, upon any consideration, unite his fortunes with a woman from whose bosom have departed the very sentiments and feelings for which human nature, with all its depravity, has a kind of homage in reserve. Hence, when at any time Agnes mourned over her *unbelief*, she repudiated the thought of disrespect for the religion of the cross. She acknowledged it to be from God; and she was willing to regard its sublime revelations as, though above and beyond reason, in no sense opposed to or inconsistent with it.

In my efforts to tranquillise her mind this evening, I found it necessary to explain to her the proper position of the decree of election in the scheme of grace. To her, as it has been to many others, this scriptural doctrine was for a time the reverse of comforting:—

'God's decrees to comprehend, few of any
 Intellectual size did not sometime in their day attempt,
 But all in vain; for as the distant hill,
 Which on the right or left the traveller's eye
 Bounds, seems advancing as he walks; and oft
 He looks, and looks, and thinks to pass; but still
 It forward moves, and mocks his baffled sight—
 Till night descends and wraps the scene in gloom—
 So did this moral height the vision mock:
 So lifted up its dark and cloudy head
 Before the eye, and met it evermore.'

COURSE OF TIME.

Occasionally also she desiderated evidence upon the genuineness and authenticity of the scriptures. At other times she was afraid she had sinned beyond the hope of mercy, and had never been, notwithstanding the good opinion that others had formed of her religious character, anything better than a mere formalist. She latterly came to the conviction that, upon the principles of christianity as taught by its divine Master, she was unconverted—still in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity—and consequently, that as she could do nothing for herself, or of herself, her future prospects could not be but dark and menacing. There was one feature, however, in this season of spiritual darkness and trouble which was remarkable. Though she gave way to doubts of the above class, she never expressed any hope in her own good works, or connected salvation and eternal life with anything but the free and sovereign

gift of God to man through the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. She had no doubt that the Bible doctrine was, that the justification of a condemned sinner depended alone and entirely upon his personal interest by faith in the vicarious sacrifice of the Lamb of God, who was slain from the foundation of the world. But then, she was under painful solicitude because she had not a distinct apprehension of the argument for the divine authority of scripture, and no inward consciousness that she was personally interested in the atonement which it reveals. Direct replies to all her queries were of course given, both at this and subsequent times, when these floods of great waters broke in upon her soul; and it was not superficial answers that satisfied her. Every point in the argument was keenly examined, and the bearing of the parts upon the whole subjected to impartial scrutiny. She seemed so far satisfied with the statement I made of *election*. She was told that, whether confounding or comforting, such, beyond all controversy, was a doctrine of scripture; and when properly viewed, that it was one of the most encouraging; that for God merely to have promised an atonement for our sins, without a regenerator to our souls, could have accomplished no good; for nothing can be plainer than that, if left to himself, the sinner will continue in his sin, and despise the offers of salvation through Christ, till they are for ever beyond his reach; and that, consequently, it was the very perfection of divine love

that the benefits of Christ's death, while they are offered to all freely and sincerely, are secure to some of whom the apostle writes, that 'they were *chosen* in Christ before the foundation of the world;'^{*} that they were 'predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself,' according to the good pleasure of his will.'

Not only on a death-bed, but often in the course of life, do the inexplicable things of God agitate and enfeeble the faith of the christian. They ought not to be permitted to do so. We have the management of this matter in our own hands; and if we only use 'the mystery' of Christ's revelation as God intends we should, it cannot be the cause of disturbance to any mind. How impressively true the words of the learned Neander, whose great spirit, as we trace these lines, has passed into the heavens: 'Jesus would not have been the Son of God and Son of man, had not his words, like his works, with all their adaptation to the circumstances of the times, contained some things that are inexplicable; had they not borne concealed within them the germ of an infinite development, reserved for future ages to unfold. It is *this* feature—and all the evangelists concur in their representations of it—which distinguishes Christ from all other teachers of men. Advance as they may, they can never reach him; their only task need be, by taking him more and more into their life and thought, to learn better how

* Eph. i. 4, 5.

to bring forth the treasures that lie concealed in HIM.' Now, the doctrine of election is just one of God's words containing this 'germ,' which is 'reserved for future ages to unfold.' It is revealed now to be believed, not to be understood. The belief of it is perfectly consistent with the most exalted and cheering views we have of the Deity; and so far from its being a proof against, it is one strongly in favour of the divinity of that book which most expressly affirms it. It should never be forgotten, however, that we abuse the doctrine of election whenever we turn it against our own interest in the offers of pardoning mercy. This is presumption. It is to take for granted not only what has not been revealed, but what is contrary to express revelation; for God has declared that 'he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that all would turn unto him, and live.' With the reconciliation of these two apparently contradictory views no being has any business. God alone can do that, and He will do it in his own time, to the confusion of the scorner. It is enough to add, that the doctrine leads not to despair but to encouragement; and the fault is our own if it does not fill us with comfort. It is indeed very inspiring to be assured that our acceptance of Christ does not alone depend upon ourselves. Had it been so, we had never chosen him. No doubt a powerful and cheering influence comes down from the cross; but from spiritual death the cross alone never could have awakened man, nor

excited one ennobling desire, nor removed one baneful passion. Appeals to interest, to gratitude, to heaven, to hell, must have fallen ineffectual on his dull ear and duller soul; and the entire apparatus of the gospel economy might have moved on from age to age, but from none of the descending generations of men could it of itself have reclaimed even one apostate. How pleasing, then, to think that the potency of the christian dispensation lies in the decree of election, which, as it goes out in the profusion and majesty of its merciful mandate, completes the perfect adaptation of the scheme of love to the spiritual deadness of man's natural state! Upon its removal, then, from the system of grace we might all hang up our harps upon the willows, and learn the song of salvation no more.

After listening to sentiments such as these, she said—

‘But then, as God has concealed the names of the elect, how is any one justified in considering himself to be among their number?’

‘The decree itself is God's concern. He has not seen it meet to reveal the elect by name. He is under no obligation to do so, and his not having done so leaves us all to include ourselves as among them to whom the offer of pardon is unconditionally made. Besides, we may know ourselves to be among the number of his adopted by the feelings of affection which we cherish towards him, and the efforts we make to please him in all things. Hence the apostle's

order in that well-known text, "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure." If we make our conversion evident, we may rise from it up to the assurance of our election. It is utter contempt of this divine arrangement when any begin to seek for proof of election before they repent, and believe, and obey.'

'And what about the evidence of the divine claims of christianity?'

'Nothing is more easily demonstrated to be from God than the religion of the cross. Waving other considerations at present, only think of the proof from prophecies fulfilled and fulfilling, and of miracles performed by the Saviour and by the apostles in his name. Do you not think it a much greater task to faith, to believe that the whole affair was a conspiracy, and that the predictions of holy men of God, thousands of years before Christ came, were literally accomplished merely by lucky coincidences? While the evidence from prophecy remains, the Bible cannot be proved to be spurious; and as for the *miracles*, there can be no doubt, our enemies themselves being witnesses, that they were performed; and this being the case, we are shut up to believe christianity to be from God, or else that God lent his omnipotence to a few impostors, to propagate in the world, and torture mankind with a lie!' I then repeated these exquisite lines of Dryden, where he apostrophises the inspiration of the New Testament:—

‘Whence, but from heaven, could men unskilled in arts,
 In several ages born, in several parts,
 Weave such agreeing truths? or how, or why
 Should all conspire to cheat us with a lie?
 Unasked their pains—ungrateful their advice;
 Starving their gain, and martyrdom their price.’

Such like, at this and other times, was the substance of my battling with her doubts. She was quieted, but not convinced.

Before retiring from her on the evening of this day, at her request we sang together these beautiful lines. Her voice, though feeble, was audible:—

‘As when the Hebrew prophet raised
 The brazen serpent high,
 The wounded look’d, and straight were cur’d,
 The people ceased to die,’ etc.

I then read, with a few comments, the 103d Psalm; and having prayed for the divine blessing on our conversation, left her for the night.

JUNE 27, WEDNESDAY.—It was the afternoon of this day before I saw Agnes. She had had a weak turn since morning. Having obtained her sanction, I read to her the beginning of the fourteenth chapter of John. The theme was Christ, and his affecting sympathy with his people in trial. I had to impress upon her the duty of *taking God at his word*, and exhorted her not to let her heart be troubled, when he desires that she should not. I unfolded the Saviour’s character, as the willing hearer and the

ready answerer of prayer, and opened up a few of the attractive scenes of his life, wherein he is represented as listening to the cry of the blind, the lame, the diseased, the dying, and from which we are entitled to conclude that he is willing now, as he was then, to heal us, especially our spiritual diseases, if we call upon him. To this exposition she listened with amazing delight, and when I asked her if she had felt any comfort from hearing it, she replied, smiling, 'Much—much.' I then noticed a hymn book on her pillow, which she had been reading when I entered.

'Do you relish the reading of sacred poetry?' I asked.

'Yes, I do; and there are some very beautiful hymns here, *but* there are many of them not at all suitable to me. I prefer some to others; for instance, I like those that breathe penitential sentiments, and that take the form of prayers. When I lay aside the book, I can use them—I can breathe over their requests.'

'But there are others which I should rejoice to see you reading and relishing, such as those which express joy and peace in believing, or tell of the love and glory of our dear Lord and Saviour, or paint the beauties of the "better land."'

'Ah no, my dear John,' she said. 'I do not like these so well, they go far beyond my experiences. I cannot *yet* go so far.'

In this interview I could not get the painful subject

of death approached, and after a devotional service I left her in the evening in a much more comfortable state than I had found her on the previous one. She was better, too, *bodily*.

JUNE 28, THURSDAY.—This morning dawned, but it brought not along with its light the rays of that hope which had gilded the cloud of the preceding evening. She had tossed up and down, painful and sleepless, during its silent watches.

‘Oh if I could enjoy some ease,’ she said, ‘I would not fear danger! *If* I be spared, I will now know how to appreciate health. Never, never can such a night as this be forgotten.’

‘Do you murmur, Agnes?’ I asked.

‘No—I hope not; for I know that I suffer for my sins *deservedly*.’

Then came another paroxysm of sore pain. When it abated, I asked her—

‘Would you not like to be in heaven to see your dear parents?’

‘Certainly. O yes, I would!’

‘Do you rejoice, then, in the prospect of meeting with them?’

She seemed perplexed, and, with considerable hesitation, replied—

‘No; but—I do not know. I have never thought of it. O dear, I do not know what I am saying—ease me, ease me!’

Ah! thought I, as far as ever from realising her

situation, and still strong in the hope of life! and yet on this very day, on being told that a letter had come announcing the death of her maternal uncle, Captain Husband, she remarked to her beloved friend, Mrs Gillespie, who had come from Rew to visit and nurse her, ‘So, uncle John is dead! One of us is away, and I may be the next.’ This, however, might be said without the realisation of her conjecture. Having passed a day of much pain, I suggested, on bidding her good night, that we might omit the usual devotional services, when she at once interrupted me—‘Why? O why would you omit them? You know I can but seldom now read for myself, and I hope you will go on.’ Even at this time she desired the benefit of spiritual exercises, though she did not derive from them that joyful satisfaction which they afterwards imparted to her mind.

JUNE 29, FRIDAY.—‘Have you been meditating?’ was my first question on seeing her this morning. She replied that she had.

‘Upon what?’ I asked

‘Upon what is for my good. I pray to be made good.’

‘Your *wish*, then, is to be made really and truly good?’

‘O yes—it is—it is!’

‘I need not tell you that there is no good about yourself. Just hear me read one or two passages from the Bible:—“They are corrupt; they have done abo-

minable works; there is none that doeth good." "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint; from the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it: but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores." "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." "Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight." "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" and are "*by nature* the children of wrath, even as others."

Having depicted from these passages our original depravity and our own personal unworthiness, I asked her what she thought of herself, when she immediately assented to the humbling doctrines of the cross, and acknowledged herself to be a poor, lost, needy sinner.

'No,' she added; 'truly there is no good thing in me.'

'Where, then, do you look for righteousness?'

'It is only to be found in Christ Jesus.'

'Do you, then, confide in his righteousness for pardon and acceptance?'

'I wish to do so.'*

'Do you not believe that it is perfectly sufficient for you?'

'Yes, I think I do. But, John, is it not one thing to believe that this righteousness is sufficient intrinsically, and quite a different thing to receive it for one's self? *O, I cannot accept of it!* I am not im-

* See 'The Hiding Place,' chap. vii.

proving; I am a wicked creature; my guilt lies not merely in my corrupt nature, but in innumerable actual transgressions. I fear that I am not a believer in the word of God after all. What a sinner I have been!*

‘But, my dear Agnes, do you not know that it is written, “The blood of Christ, God’s Son, cleanseth from all sin?” Do you not think it can cleanse away even your sins?’

‘Yes, I know what it can do; it is infinitely valuable.’

It was evident that she was again in the battles of faith, and there was the concomitant cloud and confusion of spiritual conflicts. There was need of more light. I again took the Bible, and read and explained to her Isaiah liii. I wished to bring her simply to rely on the atonement of Christ—to look away from herself, and to look alone to Jesus. But God’s time was not yet come. She ‘refused to be comforted.’ After a pause, Mrs Gillespie asked her if she was not desirous to go to heaven.

‘O yes,’ she quickly replied, ‘I am. If I was sure of entering heaven at death, I would die with pleasure to-morrow; *but—I do not think there is any danger in my complaint.*’

‘You know that we all love you, Agnes, but we could part with you if we thought you were going to heaven—we pray that you may.’

* See ‘The Hiding Place,’ chap. viii.

‘It is a source of great consolation to me to know that you remember me in your prayers. Mr Gillespie, Isabella tells me, prays for me—that is a friend I did not think of: “the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”’

After another pause she said to me :—

‘I will tell you why I like you to be so much with me. When I read the Bible, especially the New Testament, which is most beautiful, I often detect myself far away in thought from it; but when you read to me, or repeat passages all prepared and fitted to suit my peculiar views and feelings, I draw very great comfort from them. I like you also to pray with me—I cannot pray aright—I wander—I begin to thank God—to ask greater submission to his will—to implore an interest in Christ—and then I am over into slumber; but when you pray, I attend and follow.’

‘God,’ I replied, ‘does not expect so much from a person in deep affliction, as he does from others whose bodies and minds are alike sound. What he most expects from you, in your circumstances, is patience.’

‘Ah, then, he expects what he does not get from me.’

‘But you ought not to think of God as a hard taskmaster, “reaping where he has not sowed, and gathering where he has not strawed.” He “knows your frame, and remembers you are dust;” “the bruised reed he will not break, and the smoking

flax he will not quench ;” he does not “despise even the day of small things ;” and you remember what he said to Moses when he stood with him in the cloud and proclaimed his name to be “the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness, and in truth ; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin.”’

‘Yes ; it is all true ; but are there not many *awful threatenings* in the Bible ? what comes of them ? who receives them ?’

‘Not the lovers of God,’ I replied. ‘His menaces are denounced only against those who persist in sin and reject his mercy. They cannot touch a believer in Christ, who is not only a “hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest,” but “*in him* all the *promises* are yea and amen.”’*’

‘Yes, there is comfort in that thought ; but, John, is there not a sin against the Holy Ghost ? is it not possible to be beyond the pale of pardon here ? may we not so live as to drive the Holy Spirit away, and provoke God to say of us as he said of Ephraim, “He is joined to his idols ; let him alone ?”’

‘There can be no doubt of this,’ I answered, ‘and many have accordingly perished.’

‘And what if this should be the case with me ?’

‘You must not think so,’ I rejoined, ‘even for one moment. Just listen to me. The “sin against the Holy Ghost” is one of those revelations of which

* See ‘The Hiding Place,’ pp 248-253.

Satan makes use to destroy the confidence of God's people. He insinuates that it has been committed where it has not; and if we would reflect for a single moment, we would see that the very concern we feel upon the subject is the proof—the very proof that it is not chargeable against us. They sinned against the Holy Ghost in the days of our Lord who denied his Messiahship—who resisted the clear evidence of his deity, and who attributed his power of working miracles to the agency of devils. Now, does it not seem a matter of course that such persons should not be saved. These very evidences, employed by the Spirit of God to demonstrate the truth of Messiah's mission, ought *reasonably* to have captivated every mind, inasmuch as nothing can be conceived so irresistibly convincing. And under the gospel dispensation still, this sin consists in resisting the proofs of his revelation, and living in systematic contempt and neglect of his great atonement. There is but “one Mediator between God and man.” If, then, we despise him, and continue till death to refuse him, of course we perish—we commit the sin against the Holy Ghost—we will not accept of mercy, hence we ourselves resolve that we are not to be forgiven. This is what is called putting one's self beyond the pale of mercy. Notwithstanding, the greatest sinner may return. He shall never be forgiven while he commits this sin; but in that very moment in which he yields himself up to God and submits to his righteousness,

he is accepted in "the beloved One." It all resolves itself into this—God is ready to pardon whenever we are willing to be pardoned in the way and manner of his own appointment. Let us read together that most touching and beautiful of all our Lord's parables, "The Prodigal Son," and you shall see all this to be true.'

Having read and explained this precious passage, she seemed somewhat composed. She admitted that she desired to be saved through the blood of the cross, and that she acknowledged no other name but 'Jesus Christ,' and no other foundation but 'him crucified.' Still she reflected upon herself, and said—'Have I not been a *formalist* in religion; and am I not now deceiving myself into the idea that I am a believer? O I have been a thoughtless creature! The world and its vanities have been uppermost in my heart; God and eternity have passed but seldom, and never seriously, through my thoughts, so that I have been, and am, in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity!'

It was indeed distressing to hear and witness such scenes. She was manifestly without 'the peace of God,' but whether or not without the 'grace of God,' it is not man's province to determine. I endeavoured to lead her to the 'fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness;' urged upon her the necessity of turning her attention *away from herself* altogether for a season, to regard Jesus on the

cross; told her that she seemed already to be 'convinced of sin' by the Holy Ghost; that she was willing to confess, and that God was more willing to forgive; and that in this state, having seen her worthlessness and deplored it, her duty was very clear, 'to flee' unto Christ, and cast all her sins upon him who 'is able to save unto the uttermost all who come unto God by him.'

The evening—and *such* an evening—was now far spent, and it behoved me to leave her. Before doing so, I asked if I should pray for her.

'Yes,' she said, 'pray for me; O pray for me, that God would quicken my heart, still "dead in trespasses and sins;" that he would give me more comfort in my Bible; some comfort in every verse; and above all, that he would give me "AN INTEREST IN CHRIST."''

I promised, and we parted for the night.

JUNE 30, SATURDAY.—'I must leave you this afternoon, Agnes. To-morrow is the Lord's-day, and you know I must be at home.'

'Can you not obtain supply for your pulpit, and remain with me? I have had a little sleep through the night, for which I am thankful to God, and we might have some profitable conversation.'

Just as she said this, one of her brothers entered, and put into her hand a beautiful rose. She smiled, and thanked him. I took the *Lamp* and showed to her the rose of Sharon, expecting a reply that might tell of begun faith, and send me home happy.

‘You have in Jesus,’ I said, ‘a far more fragrant and lovely flower than this. He is the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley.’

She made no reply. I pressed the subject upon her attention perhaps too strongly, but after such a midnight battle as this week had witnessed between us, I panted after the honour of the conqueror.

‘I should rejoice, Agnes, if you would repeat after me these words, “My rose is the rose of Sharon.”’

‘My rose is the rose of Sharon,’ was the immediate echo.

‘My dear sister, did you utter these words in faith?’

‘I hope so,’ she replied; but her expression was anything but hopeful.

‘I am anxious to know whether my presence with you this week has tended to your comfort.’

‘I have got some comfort from you.’

‘Do I leave you with an easier mind—with more light?’

‘Yes, I dare say you do.’

‘Permit me to implore you, as you value your soul’s peace, when your sins rise up against you, and when you recall the threatenings of the Almighty against them, to turn your mind boldly and quickly to the precious promises which I have so often repeated to you. O betake yourself to the refuge provided—escape to Christ for your life! The dread of the threatening law ought to drive you to the hopes of the promising gospel. And why should you prefer to

contemplate the *frown* of the one rather than the *smile* of the other?*

‘Where would be my comfort but for the promises?’ she meekly replied.

‘Especially such as these, Agnes:—“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” “I, even I am he that *blotteth out* thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.” “I have *blotted out*, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins: return unto me, for I have redeemed thee.” “Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, *because he delighteth in mercy*. He will turn again; he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities: and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.”’†

Returning pain and restlessness put a stop to this work. Having prayed with her, I left the room. When alone with Mrs Gillespie, she said—

‘I will sadly miss John’s prayers to-night—he is going away.’

* See ‘The Hiding Place,’ pp. 133-138.

† Isa. i. 18; xlv. 22; Micah vii. 18-20.

‘He will pray for you wherever he is.’

‘I know that—*for* me—but not *with* me. Will some one read to me the fifty-first Psalm?’ Her request was complied with.

Thus terminated the solemn work of this first and memorable week—a week of which Agnes spoke often to her dying day. The account given is meagre indeed, compared with the reality. On some occasions she spoke so rapidly, and followed up my answers with such quickness, that I found it impossible to recall a tithe of what passed. It was a week of constant conflict. I hope it was the battle of faith—a week of perplexity and doubts, and full of much spiritual solicitude to us both; but it was also a week out of whose darkness came forth light, and from whose disquietudes there arose the joys and peace of the Holy Ghost. In one sense I left her as I found her; for though we both felt that each had a reason not stated for such earnest exercises, there was no direct allusion to the hopelessness of her case. I felt that substantially the revelation was made to her, and that it would not now fall so heavily when it was actually communicated. Though far from being satisfied with her state of mind, I was thankful that she appeared to be *concerned* about her spiritual interests, and that she had accurate knowledge of the ‘way of life.’ She distinctly apprehended the atonement as the foundation of the sinner’s hope; she acknowledged the efficacy and infinite worth of the Saviour’s sacrifice; she was

charmed with his character as an *advocate* and a *friend*; and she even got the length of being willing to be nothing so that he might be everything. But still she was weak in the spirit of her inner man, when she looked within and saw her sinfulness, and when she looked behind and saw her innumerable transgressions, and when she looked before and realised the judgment-seat of Christ. She seemed as if standing at the mouth of the well of salvation, but afraid or unfit to let down the pitcher to draw and drink. She saw the Saviour before her with outstretched arms, and trembled for a season to rush into his embrace. But the dawn was at hand, and ere long 'the day-star from on high' visited her.

How serious is the responsibility of those who have thus to guide and uphold the souls of their dying relatives; and yet what a mercy it is that they have at their command such an amount of glorious consolations! None need be afraid to accompany the afflicted ones through the dark valley, if they have chosen for their motto the saying of the Psalmist—
'**THY WORD IS A LAMP UNTO MY FEET.**'

CHAPTER VI.

The Rise of Faith.

'One night, methought a voice said in my cell,
Despondency, and Anguish, and Despair
Are falling o'er thee—"Curse thy God, and die!"
Peace! Resignation! and immortal Hope!
A dewy voice replied. It was a dream;
But the good angel's voice was in my soul
Most sweet when I awoke; and from that hour
A heavenly calm hath never left me.'

JOHN WILSON.

ALL hope of Agnes' recovery was now abandoned, and the sorrow of her friends was great on her account. They grieved that soon they should see her face no more. Solicitude about the youthful sufferer no doubt still existed; but it was occasioned by very different considerations. We began to be alarmed about her eternal interests. We had scarcely, if at all, doubted that her religion was genuine; and, had she not of her own accord pronounced so decidedly against herself, we could not have doubted it, now that she was passing away from the concerns of time. But the question of her soul's spiritual state

was by far too important to be settled on the grounds of our favourable estimates. Her language concerning herself from this time was very remarkable for its distinct and unaffected condemnation of her state and conduct in the past. She insisted that she had not felt the power of divine truth in her soul—that she had not received the Spirit of adoption—that all her so-called religious feelings had been fancies—and that, unless some great and evident change were effected upon her before she died, she did not see how she could be saved. To us, who loved her so dearly, this was indeed a very heart-rending state of things. The idea of her soul appearing before God uninterested in Christ was insupportable, and made us feel that we could cheerfully be resigned to her death, if we were assured of her conversion. For a while we felt as if stunned by her revelation that she was not yet born again. Of course we did not then permit ourselves to believe that it was so: we set it down to a morbid jealousy of herself, and to that lowly estimate which even the most eminent saints form of their own state and character. But she had shaken this foundation of our partial judgment; and the very thought that it might be with her as she said it was, threw us into fear and trembling lest she should die, and, peradventure, be lost. It was, therefore, with pain which cannot be described that her spiritual doubtings and conflicts, during the bygone week, had been witnessed. Though towards

the end of the week there was undoubtedly a change in her way of speaking about herself, and apparently, too, more composure of manner and placidity of expression, the indications of *anxious inquiry* were many and distressing. Sincere and fervent were our prayers that she might be spared till the clouds were chased away, and till the 'day dawned.' Truly our souls 'waited for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning.' Our hope was in his mercy, that he would bless the very serious and earnest work in which we had been engaged with her, and that soon she would, of her own accord, cast the burden of fear from our minds, though it were only by the use of the publican's prayer, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' Nor was our hope put to confusion. As the Sabbath dawned, *Faith* seemed to have arisen 'with healing under her wings.' With some diffidence she ventured to express the hope to a brother, that the Lord had dealt bountifully with her soul, and had so greatly blessed the conversations and exercises of the past week, that she now felt as she had never felt before, and now saw the preciousness of Jesus as she had never seen it. It is impossible to express the joyful nature of our feelings over this token of God's reconciling love. Still we were not permitted to be carried away by too much confidence that the great change of regeneration had actually taken place. She occasionally expressed herself with great caution, and now and then even seemed on the eve of destroying

our hopes. Before the reader, however, has closed this chapter, he may be convinced that this translation of Agnes' soul from darkness to light had actually taken place.

A night of incessant pain had ushered in the morning of this holy Sabbath (July 1st.) One of her brothers was lending his assistance to change her position, and expressed his hope that the 'peace of God' was now not altogether a stranger to her bosom.

'I hope not,' she replied. 'But this I know, I am willing now to die, though it were only to be relieved from such agony.'

'It is indeed a sore trial to you, Agnes, but it is the Lord; and I hope you can say, "Let him do what seemeth good unto him."''

'I know,' she said, 'that I ought not to wish death, merely to be free of pain; it is sinful to do so. I feel these lines very applicable to me—

"God will not always chide,
And when his strokes are felt,
His strokes are fewer than our crimes,
And lighter than our guilt."

I wish you would read to me the 14th chapter of John.'

When this was done, she received a visit from one of the daughters of her kind physician, Dr Abercrombie, who devoted the interval between the forenoon and afternoon service to her dying friend. This visit was most seasonable and beneficial, and Agnes appreciated its kindness. The subject of death was not

shunned, and the necessity of being prepared for it was mildly but faithfully urged.

‘Yes,’ she said, ‘all should be ready for death before sickness comes; a bed of suffering has plenty to do with itself. I hope I know what is duty, but it is not easy to get the heart to be submissive.’

She was advised to use diligently the means of grace, especially prayer and the reading of scripture. She said—

‘What a sweet time it was to me when John was with me last week! His exertions have brought me round thus far, that I think I am now quite willing to resign myself into the hands of God.’

Next day she said to her nurse, ‘I hope my brother will return soon. I wish I had him here to pray with me; and yet I am sorry for him, because he appears to be so sorry for me. I know he will pray for me at home, but I don’t hear him; I need some one to keep me in mind of duty; I am not able to pray for myself.’

In the evening a brother asked if she could listen to a chapter of the Bible.

‘I should like to hear one very much, but not *now*. I am suffering great pain, and cannot give undivided attention. When God’s word is read, I wish to be edified by it.’

An opiate having been administered, she requested that the scriptures should now be read to her, as she thought she could listen.

‘Read to me,’ she said, ‘the fifty-first Psalm.’

She listened with great interest to its penitential strains, and then asked for her hymn book. At her request the following hymn was read; it became with her a great favourite; she committed it to memory, and often during the long nights of suffering was overheard repeating it—

‘My Father knows my feeble frame;
He knows how poor a worm I am—
Untold, he knows it all.
The least temptation serves to draw
My footsteps from my Father’s law,
And makes me slide and fall.

‘Of this I give him daily proof,
And yet he does not cast me off,
But owns me still as his:
He spares—he pities—he forgives
The most rebellious child that lives;
So great his patience is.

‘And shall I then a pretext draw
Again to violate his law?
My soul revolts at this:
I’ll love, and wonder, and adore,
And beg that I may sin no more
Against such love as this.

‘O love divine! eternal source
Of good to man, I mark thy course—
I mark it with delight.
To Bethlehem I follow thee,
And there the wondrous babe I see—
A cheering, glorious sight.

‘I trace thee thence to Calvary,
And there the Man of sorrows see,
His body bathed in blood.

The stream I followed from its source
 Now pours with a resistless force,
 A rapid, swelling flood.

‘Its waters health and healing bring,
 They make the waste rejoice and sing;
 Their progress thus we trace:
 They pour their virtues through the earth,
 They fill the world with sacred mirth,
 And gladden every place.’

It was now noticeable that the introduction of religious subjects was made by herself. Formerly they had to be suggested by others. It does not appear, however, that as yet she had any idea of the probable termination to her illness. Her spontaneous references to death and its realities were rather indications of a mind chastened by long affliction into a sort of relish for christian sympathy, and into a habitual communion with serious truths. God thus prepared her to receive the intelligence which before another sun had set was at length certified to her.

JULY 3, TUESDAY.—Immediately after Dr Abercrombie’s visit this morning she was observed to be much agitated, and when asked for the cause of it, she replied—

‘O my dear Wardlaw, when Dr Abercrombie was taking leave of me just now, I overheard him telling nurse just to give me anything I would take, and he left me, saying, “Poor child—poor child,” in such a melancholy tone that makes me suspect he thinks my complaints *incurable*.’

She spoke with a faltering voice, weeping all the while. This was, then, the first time that she realised the issue of her illness. Here we have the first sickness of hope, and the first trembling of its wings—'tis the first fall in the notes of its music, and the first dirge of a young heart over darkening prospects. It is painful to think of the shock she now sustained throughout those warm affections which had nestled on endearing objects, but which now took alarm lest they should soon be riven asunder, and of those social sympathies which bound her to life and the world, now and quickly relaxed in fear of their speedy dissolution. Every tie of nature and friendship now thrilled under the dreadful announcement of their doom—'Dust thou art.' But though there was this decendency of her expectations, and this sudden rebuke to her fond wishes, the love of life did not yet die, and even the hope of it was not to be given up without another struggle. Just at this juncture a kind Providence so ordered it that one of her earliest friends called for the first time since her illness commenced. This was the Rev. Dr Halley, now of Troy in the United States of America, but then of Leith. When she heard that he was in the house she was much pleased, and prepared to receive him. In a few minutes it could not have been known from her appearance that her heart had so recently been loaded with a burden so heavy. Dr Halley had been requested to let her know, now that she had got over the first shock

of fear, that there was no hope for her, and that she must remove her affections entirely from this world, and prepare diligently for that which was coming. He very kindly consented to do so, and entered her chamber for that purpose. She gave him one of those sweet smiles which had so often sealed other lips that would have told her of death as at hand, and immediately commenced to converse with an ease and self-command which at once encouraged him to proceed.

‘Have your friends, Miss Macfarlane, or your physicians, ever made you aware of your true condition?’

‘No,’ she replied, ‘they have not. What do they think?’

‘It is a painful duty to discharge; but my regard for your best interests binds me to inform you that your complaints are dangerous, and that there is reason to fear that you may not be long in the land of the living.’

She received this announcement apparently surprised, but the solitary tear that dropped upon her pillow was the only sign of the internal tumult. Dr Halley followed up his service of friendship by most appropriate and beautiful remarks, to which she listened with marked interest. The interview was altogether so impressive that I shall allow Dr Halley himself to narrate it. I quote from a letter which he sent to me three months after Agnes’ death:—

‘Agnes had been some months indisposed before I

heard of her illness. When at last I came to the knowledge of it, accompanied with the notice that the symptoms were such as to give serious alarm to her friends, you will give me credit when I say that I felt most deeply. The interest that I have in the welfare of all his family, arising from the respect that I cherish to the memory of your excellent father, was *in this case* deepened, if possible, from the fact that Agnes had been an old pupil of mine, and gave very early indications of a superior intellect, from the proficiency which she made in all her branches of education. I hesitated for some time after my knowledge of her illness as to the propriety of visiting; for I knew that many excellent friends of your late father had been assiduous in their attendance, and in unfolding to her the consolations and the promises of the gospel. Our common friend, Mr Arnot, informed me how highly she was gratified when any friend waited upon her and conversed with her upon religious subjects; and from that moment I was resolved to embrace the very earliest opportunity of seeing her. The first time that I saw her since her illness was on the Tuesday after the first Sabbath of July. Before I went into her room, I conversed for a short time with your brother William. I then learned that her medical adviser had the very worst apprehensions as to the termination of her complaint, and he requested me to disclose this to her with as much delicacy and tenderness as I could.

‘When I saw her, my dear Sir, much as I laid my account with the alteration that disease must have made in her countenance, I was really not prepared for the great change that had taken place. Her countenance, which was always an interesting one, was at this time peculiarly so in the serenity of mind that it indicated, while her eye, instead of being quenched with trouble, was clear, and burned with peculiar brilliancy. My name had been previously announced to her, yet when I went in, my visit seemed to have all the effect of a joyful surprise upon her mind, and she expressed the deepest gratitude to me for coming to see her. After what I learned from your brother of the pleasure she felt in religious conversation, and saw from evidence too plain to be denied, too distressing to be resisted, that her continuance in this world could not in all probability be long, I arrived at the intention of my visit as speedily as possible. In these circumstances, experience has hitherto confirmed me in the practice, that the best method to ascertain the spiritual frame of mind, as well as the nature of those hopes the individual has for eternity, is by *proposing questions to them*. In any other way we are in danger of keeping to vague generalities, by which the attention may not be awakened nor the conscience aroused; but when the health of the individual permits, I have often found that this method of instruction was highly edifying and useful, both to the afflicted person and to the

visitor. It was in this way that I conducted my first conversation with your sister. The following is a very imperfect outline of a visit which, from the interesting evidence it gave me of the existence of religious principle in her mind, I shall never forget:—

‘After a few general questions, I asked her if she had felt the consolations of the gospel under her affliction.

“My experience,” she replied, “is not always the same. Sometimes the future world appears to me very bright and sometimes very dark. I cannot always say with David, ‘Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.’”

‘It was at this time, I think, that she made the following remark, which peculiarly pleased me:—

“We must not judge of our interest in Christ only by our frame of mind. We may have religion within us, but God, for good reasons, may order it that we should not at all times alike experience its consolations.”

‘I asked her upon whom her hopes for happiness in another world were built. She replied, “On Jesus Christ alone; for ‘this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, *even the chief.*’”

‘It was at this stage of the conversation that a slight embarrassment, which she seemingly felt in disclosing the state of her experience, was entirely thrown aside, and she answered afterwards without

the least reserve. The answers that she made led us into a very interesting conversation as to the instances in scripture of the divine forgiveness: Manasseh, Paul, Zaccheus—she herself added, the thief upon the cross, and Mary Magdalene. Her mind seemed to be full of astonishment at the forbearance of God to his sinful creatures, and the invitations and encouragements that he gave to them to come to him that they might live; for, said she, “How easily can God punish us, and how richly we deserve punishment! We should say, It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are spared, and because his tender compassion fails not.” This naturally led us to the prodigal son; and she seemed to take a peculiar delight in filling up all the circumstances that went to aggravate his guilt, that the indulgence of the father might more strikingly appear. His rashness and inexperience—his ingratitude and his prodigality—his coming home in rags, his patrimony all squandered—yet the father saw him a great way off, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him. This part of the conversation occupied a considerable time, and was pursued by questions and answers that have now escaped my memory—only I remember the love of Christ in his dying for us, and the encouragement which his intercession in heaven should give us to come to God to obtain mercy, were particularly dwelt upon.

‘I asked if she thought she had derived benefit from her recent affliction.

“O yes,” she replied; “in what a different light does the world appear to me now from what it once did! I wish some of my companions were here, who I am afraid are too thoughtless, and they would perhaps learn an important lesson. Our Saviour spoke truly when he said, ‘What shall it profit a man though he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?’”

‘At an after part of the conversation she said—

“How much reason have I to bless God, who has thus early afflicted me! If this had not been the case, I might have gone on in carelessness, and never thought of another world; but this has taught me by experience the vanity of the world, and the necessity of something to me which the world cannot give.”

‘I was very much gratified with this declaration, and took occasion to point out to her the propriety, when her young friends came to see her, of thus speaking a word in season, which might be blessed to them. I asked her (for I cannot remember all the circumstances that made question and answer follow each other regularly) if she felt a pleasure in prayer. She replied, that at times she felt a very great pleasure, and could say that God had granted her the desire of her lips; at other times she felt great despondency and distress. This led us to observe the wisdom of God in not immediately granting us what we asked, among other reasons, that the delay tends to enhance the value of the blessing.

‘I now asked her how she felt in the prospect of death. She looked at me very steadily after I had proposed this question. I then considered it my duty to tell her that while the power of God was all-sufficient, yet that there were circumstances connected with her complaint sufficient to justify the most serious apprehensions of her friends. Her countenance, when I made this statement, indicated rather surprise than alarm, and sprung, as she immediately told me, from the fact, that none of her friends had in the most distant manner communicated it to her. I told her that this had proceeded from fear lest any announcement might retard her recovery, so long as the least hope could be cherished. She was satisfied. “I hope,” said she, “God will be merciful to me, for Christ’s sake.”

‘Our conversation here was of a most interesting and solemn nature, until, fearing that she might over-fatigue herself, I proposed to pray with her, which I did, and said I would embrace an early opportunity of seeing her, with which she appeared very much gratified.’

Dr Halley had not been long gone when she sent a message by her nurse to her brother William, that he should come immediately to her.

‘William,’ she said, as he sat down beside her, ‘I think Mr Halley has spoken to me very judiciously. He has apprised me that there is danger in my complaint. Now, tell me at once, is it indeed so? Do not

fear to tell me that I am dying. I shall now suffer more from being kept in suspense than if I am told the truth at once. Oh would God I were prepared to die, if this be unto death; what a happy change! But do not keep me any longer in ignorance; it is a great sin to do so.'

'I hope you are ready for death, Agnes,' said her brother.

'I do not know if I am. If I thought I were safe—'

'I have no doubt,' he continued, 'but that God will answer the prayers of your dear parents who are in heaven.'

'I hope so,' she replied; 'but no man can answer for his brother: each must bear his own burden.'

'And yet it is comforting to know that the promise is to the parents, and to their seed after them.'

'Yes, it is. If I were assured of an interest in Christ, what is there in all this world to make me regret leaving it? I love my friends here, but yonder I have also many dearer to me still; and if I were to return to this world, I fear I have not strength to resist temptation. I cannot say that I have a feeling of *vexation* at the thought of being taken from this world.'

Who could have foretold that with such composure and submission this first solemn intimation of her approaching death would have been met? She now became somewhat thoughtful. She set death before

her mind from this moment, viewed it seriously in all its aspects, and made diligent preparation to meet its stroke. As she was musing thus, she turned to her brother Wardlaw, and addressed him with considerable earnestness on the subject, advising him to be religious before the hour of death had struck. She said—

‘When I try now to think of good things, pain often prevents me. And so I am dying; I am to leave you all. Well, we read in the Bible of children being punished for their parents’ sins; as for me, I suffer for *my own sins*.’

Words of comfort were administered, but her effort to rise above nature was growing weak, and the shadows of fear began again to fall. She longed for some one who might support her fainting heart, and wished that I had been with her at such an hour as this. And again did the Lord God of her fathers mercifully interpose on her behalf, and sent to her without doubt the most appropriate comforter she could have received from among the children of men. Just at this time the venerable Mr Brown of Inverkeithing came to visit the daughter of his friend. When she was told who it was that was in the dining room, she raised her hands and eyes upwards, her face beamed with joy, and her lips uttered praise.

‘Were you speaking?’ asked the attendant.

‘Yes, yes,’ she replied, ‘I was thanking God for sending good Mr Brown to me at such a crisis as this has been.’

It was truly affecting to witness the interview between this devout saint—this man of God—and the dying maiden. Though bending under the weight of years, he was still able to go about and do good; and hearing that Agnes was on her death-bed, his spirit had been moved to come and visit her with the consolations of the gospel. His peculiarly pleasing countenance was shaded a little, from a strong feeling of sympathy with the gentle sufferer; and the deep and mellow tones of his fine voice were rather tremulous and low as he addressed her in his usual simple but delightful strain. To detail the minutiae of the scene is impossible, but surely the blessing of God was in it. She listened to him with intense eagerness, as if salvation flowed from his lips, and drank in every word as if her spirit were quaffing the nectar of heaven. As he arose to depart, he held her hand in his, and said with much feeling—

‘I remember some of the last words of your father to me. When I was bidding him farewell, I remarked that I had kept him speaking too long. “O no,” he said; “but I have just one word more to say to you, Mr Brown, and that is, when you are at the throne of grace, remember my dear children.”’

‘I am sure you have done so,’ said Agnes, interrupting him.

‘I have tried to do it,’ replied Mr Brown, ‘and if you please, I will do it just now.’

He then offered up such a prayer as he only could present, and every one felt that they were carried with him into the very presence of God.

‘Farewell,’ he said to her; ‘the Lord be with you.’

‘I wish I was as sure of heaven,’ she was overheard saying, as he disappeared.

This merciful visitation had a pleasant effect upon her. The clouds that had threatened to gather were for the time dispersed. She was quite composed, and though much exhausted with the forenoon’s exciting scenes and revelations, she occasionally conversed with the nurse upon serious subjects. It was remarkable how quickly she took to herself the warnings of that day. She seemed to act as if not another moment could be lost, and at once began to ‘set her house in order.’ Among other little things that engaged her attention this afternoon was the finishing of some fancy paper ornaments which she had begun for her own amusement in June. These she gave to one of her brothers, and desired him to take them to two young ladies of her acquaintance whom she now feared were more gay than thoughtful. ‘Tell them,’ she said, ‘that these will be the last tokens of friendship they can receive from me; perhaps they will keep them for my sake, as they are likely to see me no more.’ Towards the evening her mind began again to be sore vexed; a sense of her awful situation pressed hard upon her, and she was often found in tears. This mental distress increased

greatly as the night advanced ; alarm seized hold of her spirit, and her cries for a minister of the gospel became constant and importunate. She implored them to send for me to come without delay.

‘ O tell him to come quickly,’ she cried. ‘ Tell him I am dying, that I am afraid to die, and that I am not ready for death. Tell him to come and pray for me and with me, and to furnish my mind with proper subjects for meditation and for prayer when I am left alone. ‘ O it is a serious, awful thing to die ! Pray you for me now,’ said she, turning to her brother William, who was standing beside her. ‘ God says, “ Where two or three are met together in my name, there I am.” This is a cheering promise.’

A prayer was then presented on her behalf, which seemed to afford her some relief. When it was finished, she looked to her youngest brother, and said to him, ‘ I am sorry to leave you, Andrew ; but if I were sure of heaven, and that you would follow, I could die to-night. I hope Jesus will pardon all my sins, and make me one of his disciples. O, Andrew, what must be the pains of hell !’

Such is a faint outline of this day’s proceedings, in which the goodness of God cannot be misapprehended in the mode by which she was made aware of her danger. We have seen how she was in part prepared for the worst, first of all, by the expressions of affectionate sympathy that fell from Dr Abercrombie—then came Dr Halley’s seasonable intimation to her,

that there was little if any hope of her recovery—and, then, as if he had been an angel from heaven sent to apply the balm of comfort to her wounded spirit, came the aged servant of Christ with whom were bound up her finest and fondest associations with the happy days of girlhood. Thus did the Lord take into his own hands the task before which we had shrunk, and in this unexpected manner announce her approaching end. Had we known that she could have received the intelligence with so much fortitude, or had we trusted more to the grace of God to support and comfort her, it might have been done sooner. How the silent watches of this night were passed, when she was left alone with her nurse, we know not—though, from what was afterwards noticed in her deportment, it may be said, that communion with God must have been, to a great extent, her resort from the agonies of natural feeling. No doubt some of her exercises would be acutely painful, as she realised to herself the cutting short of her days—the farewell to each loved friend and object—the descent of the body to the cold grave, and the flight of her immortal spirit to God who gave it. But her principal conflict would be with the fear of what follows death. Up to this she had never thought of ‘the judgment-seat’ save as in the distance; and having not the impression of being soon before it, she had not examined herself as to what might be her sentence from thence. But now the terrors of the law—the accusations of con-

science—the dread of eternal ruin—would all bear down upon her in dread attack, and upheave the deepest emotions of her soul. Such were my convictions when a letter reached me on this same evening informing me of what had taken place, and summoning me to her bedside, to pour the oil of the gospel upon the tumults of that awakened and alarmed spirit. I hastened to Edinburgh by the first steam-boat on the following day.

JULY 4, WEDNESDAY.—The morning was dull and lowering as I stepped from the boat upon the chain-pier at Newhaven, and the beautifully-cultivated walk up to the capital was shaded and uninviting, —alike sad and melancholy were my feelings as I wended my way once more up to the chamber of the dying. I was now to see her under very different impressions. She knew that she was at the door of death, and I knew that she knew it. I cannot tell how it was, but I felt more than ever averse to encounter her in this condition. The remembrance of the clouds and darkness, the unbelief and terrors through which she had caused me to pass, indisposed me for a repetition of such a scene. I naturally concluded that it should now be a much more tempestuous one than before. I sent for the nurse on my arrival, who told me that Agnes had been much worse since I left, and that she did not think she could now survive very long, and that she was most anxious to see me. Once—twice was I sent for ere

I ventured into her room. When I sat down beside her I was almost overpowered. She lay in the position into which, after the restlessness of the night, she had fallen, and out of which she could not as yet be lifted—her head was down near to the centre of the bed, and her face was half concealed by the pillow upon which her head lay. The expression of death was in her eye, which now lacked much of its wonted lustre, and feebly did she lift the heavy eyelid as she recognised me. It was a silent but eloquent recognition. As I took her passive hand in mine, the tears trickled down her wan cheek, and all she said was—

‘So, John, we *must* be parted.’

I made no reply. I heard her sobbing; and for a few minutes we continued silent. Having learned that death had in a great measure lost its terrors to her, and that she could now speak of her departure without undue emotion, I at length referred to what had been disclosed to her, and asked if she was still averse to die, or whether she was willing to resign herself into the hands of her heavenly Father.

‘I hope I am willing,’ she replied. ‘When I was in health and high in hopes of life, I viewed death with horror. I then loved the world and the things that are in the world, and could not think of leaving it. I feel differently now. I have no compunction at leaving it—nay, I do not wish to revisit it, for I might again fall a prey to its allurements. Neither

would I be afraid to die if I were only sure of going to heaven—O I trust in God that I am going there!’

‘You are perfectly sure,’ I rejoined, ‘of going to heaven if you go by Christ—he is the way, the truth, and the life; and no man cometh unto the Father but by him.’

‘Well, then, all my confidence is in the free righteousness of Christ.’

‘Then you are safe—you are sure of heaven when you die.’

‘Do you then think it possible for God to love one who remembers so little of his holy word as I do?’

‘God is willing and ready to pardon all sin; and not only so, but to love the true penitent. What is this that he says, “I will be merciful to their unrighteousnesses, and their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more;” and, “Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.”’

There was one hopeful sign in her spiritual experiences at this time, and onward to the hour of death. She was more easily drawn away from herself, and made to rest on Christ. She tried to look unto him and be saved, to behold the Lamb of God as slain from the foundation of the world for her, and to glory in his righteousness, *and in his only*. Her views of that ‘*righteousness*’ were full and correct. She could analyse its properties, and trace its connections with

her own legal and spiritual needs. Hence, when questioned concerning her obligations to the Saviour, she did not confine her reply to his *death* on the cross, but included also his *life* in the flesh. She saw distinctly what she, as a guilty and undone sinner, had not done, and could not do, and what he, as a substitute, had done, and alone could do. She owned that Jesus *lived* for sinners more than thirty years among men, placed himself under his own *law* as the rule of his own conduct, and obeyed it to the very letter, magnifying it, and making it honourable. This greatly increased her delight in him, because she felt her own incapacities for obeying that law, and yet knew that she was as much bound as ever to keep it perfectly. Thus, when she became conscious that the demands of the law had never been met by her, she instantly resorted by faith to the *obedience* of the sinner's surety, and knew that this was an obedience which she might offer in lieu of what she was bound to yield. She gloried, therefore, in the *life* of Christ. But she also gloried in his *cross*. Having sinned, she felt that she was '*condemned already*;' but Christ having '*died, the just for the unjust,*' she was comforted with the thought that the penalty due to her personal transgressions was paid in his thus being '*obedient unto death.*' This *life* and this *death* of the Son of God were the elements of that righteousness of Jesus in which she affirmed all her hopes were founded. Hence the delight she took in those passages of scrip-

ture which brought out the doctrine of the suitability of the atonement, and which connected its mysterious efficacy with the sins of men. The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah was to her, as it is to every well-ordered mind, 'a lamp' and 'a light,' especially these verses: 'Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.' Similar enjoyment did she now derive from Paul's sublime advocacy, in his epistles to the Romans and Galatians, of the doctrine of justification by faith alone, and not by the works of the law. Her whole consolation, in short, as a sinner, was obtained not only by confessing Christ, but by continually studying his personal character and work. *He* became all her 'salvation, and all her desire.' Other topics might occasionally be introduced; the lives of good men and pious females might be adverted to; the holy walk of the patriarchs might be described; but in the end she fell back upon Christ, to think more about him, to become more intimately and personally acquainted with him, to be swallowed up of love and admiration of him. And indeed this is the true and sure way to know his preciousness, and to feel the power of his redeeming love. *

'It is a growing conviction in my mind,' to use the

* See 'The Hiding Place,' chaps. v vi vii.

beautiful language of Dr John Brown, that 'vital and influential christianity consists much more than is ordinarily apprehended in an intimate personal acquaintance and friendship with our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the great revealer of God; he is the revealed divinity. The man knows the Father who knows the Son—that man alone knows the Father. Christ himself is "the way, the truth, and the life;" and it is only in so far as we really know and love him, that we are in "the way," or that "the truth" and "the life" are in us.'*

While thus engaged, a sore paroxysm of pain came upon her, and she exclaimed with some force—

'O God! relieve me from this awful pain, if it be thy will; if not, thy will be done.'

Having obtained some relief from suffering, she resumed the conversation. She was much comforted with the thought that her sufferings were not penal, but paternal—that they were proofs of God's love, not of his wrath—that they were only temporary—and that they were of a *purifying* efficacy. I endeavoured to show her that as God's children were not to suffer any more after death, so it was proper that they should fill up their due of correction here—that it is probable that every sin, even though committed by the redeemed of the Lord, has its appropriate punishment; and that therefore *here* we ought to be content to bear

* 'Discourses and Sayings of our Lord Illustrated in a Series of Expositions.' By John Brown, D.D.

the rod. Far better to lead a life here of even uninterrupted agony and have the 'rest' of heaven at last, than enjoy health, and wealth, and peace (the wicked's peace) on earth, and the despair and torment of lost souls for ever and ever. She said—

'It is indeed infinitely better. O for the grace of patience !'

'It is written, Agnes, for *your* encouragement, "My grace is sufficient for thee ; for my strength is made perfect in weakness."'

'Lord, I believe ! help mine unbelief,' was her prayer.

After a considerable pause, her eye rested upon her album, of which she had been very fond, and which had within it many pleasing reminiscences of early loves. 'It will soon be another's now,' she said, and turned away her look. Many similar allusions to what belonged to her of books or music, of ornaments or jewellery, were very affecting. She caused them all to be removed out of her sight with as much indifference as if they had never been prized. After a little she said—

'O it is painful to me to think that you will all soon forget me !'

'Never,' said one of her brothers. 'Impossible.'

'Ah, but I know it ; 'tis just the way of this world.'

After assuring her that she should never be forgotten, I asked her if she wished any further service before we parted for the night, the hour being now late.

'Yes, I should like you to perform family worship

in my room; and when you pray, be sure and make me the subject of the greatest portion of your prayer: it affords me matter for meditation during the long nights, when you are all asleep. One thing I wish you to ask for me, *that I may love Jesus more*—that I may *feel* in my heart that I really do love him. I wish to love him. O, I wish to cling to my Saviour-Lord!’ She said this in a most emphatic tone, and clasped her hands together as she instantly added—‘Alas! what a dead heart I have!’ I rejoined—

‘True, once, not *now*, Agnes. Has not God “made your heart soft” by affliction, and by his grace? Has he not been very kind to you in bringing your will into holy acquiescence with his own?’

‘God has indeed been very kind to me,’ she answered, ‘in sending so many excellent ministers to visit me. I infer from this, that he does not mean to cast me off.’

‘Surely not; he will be your God and guide even unto death, and after death your exceeding great reward.’

‘May God grant it!’

‘When I think, my dear Agnes, of the many sorrows and trials of this weary pilgrimage, and contrast them with the sublime glory and eternal beatitudes of the heavenly Canaan, I wonder not at a good man of old thus praying, “O that I had wings like a dove; for then would I fly away, and be at rest! I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest.”’

She pressed my hand, and with a sweet smile replied: 'No wonder; he might well so pray.'

Having gone through the services of family devotion, I bade her 'good night;' but what kind of night she passed I did not learn, as it was necessary for me to leave for Kincardine very early the next morning. Thus, then, passed another interview—very different indeed from all former ones. Her manner had undergone an entire change. There was about it something so serious and imposing as almost commanded our reverence. One remark is indispensable: she was much more reserved in conversation with me. She spoke comparatively little, and seemed to think that it was her duty to keep silence and get instruction. To my deep regret, this continued to the last. To her brothers, in my absence, she was very communicative; and often in their presence seemed to lose power of self-control, giving vent to some of the most sublime and impressive outbursts of adoring love and confidence. Not one of these I was ever favoured to hear, and the others were always so overpowered by them—yea, made to stand in awe before her—that they could neither take down her language, nor remember it afterwards. Though she spoke but little this day to me, it was not difficult to perceive that she had begun a new work, and that she was doing it 'with all her might'—the work of preparation for eternity. Unquestionably, the greatest part of her soul's communion was with God; and when silence was broken, it was to ask an explana-

tion of some difficulty she had encountered in the course of her cogitations. Boldly and intensely was she now occupied in the study of what constitutes a safe death; and she suffered not one moment to be lost which was allowed to her when relieved from pain. This, indeed, was a remarkable feature in the dying exercises of this young christian to her closing hours; and it is exactly what might have been expected from her early training, her family and church associations, her natural strength of mind, and her ardent temperament. It was perhaps better for her that I did not see her during this week, excepting the one day referred to. On the former one, we had exhausted most of the subjects appropriate to the dying, without the knowledge, or at least the certainty, on her part that such was her condition. She, however, remembered it all; she ruminated it all by night and day; and there is every reason to conclude that during the present week, with the conviction on her mind that she was soon to die, the Spirit of God eminently blessed it all to her soul. She herself unhesitatingly affirmed that she came forth from the conflict A CONVERT TO GOD. It may, or it may not be so; but beyond doubt it was blessed to her in the way of strengthening her faith, brightening her prospects, and establishing her trust in Jesus Christ.

Was Agnes, then, *now* pious? Was she indeed born again? and had she now received the Spirit of adoption? These questions must be answered in the

affirmative. She herself never hesitated about dating her conversion from this period. She considered that all her former professions of christianity had amounted only to formalism. She would not plead guilty to *hypocrisy*, as she never intended to deceive her fellow-creatures; but she accused herself of self-deception, and of having mistaken the mere knowledge of the truth, and a friendly feeling towards it, for religion itself—for the pure, spiritual, God-given principle of vital faith. When reflecting on the danger she had escaped, she was full of the praises of God, who had arrested her in such a perilous career, and made the furnace of affliction the birth-place of her soul. When at any time it was suggested that she might be forming rather an unjust estimate of her former state, she at once, and with manifest seriousness, maintained her position, that, whereas hitherto she had only had a name to live, now she was, and never till now, conscious of having a life-interest in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. To her view, the world had now a completely different aspect. Sin was now felt to be an abominable thing, and it was hated; and the 'one thing needful' was laid hold of by her very heart of hearts, and doated over and prized as a found treasure, far more precious, she said, than health or wealth, than ten thousand times ten thousand worlds. Above all, JESUS CHRIST was to her now what he never was before, precious as a Saviour from sin—not only from the curse and consequences, but from the pollu-

tion and power of sin. To her he became the 'chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely.' Whenever his name was mentioned, her expression changed, it may be from the repose of trust to the smile of rapturous joy; and many, many were the truly beautiful and even eloquent perorations in his praises with which some of her heavenly passages were concluded.

It may, perhaps, be thought that this was rather the development or maturity than the commencement of piety in the soul of Agnes; that the change was too great and sudden to have been of such recent production; and that the mere circumstance of her severe and prolonged sufferings, connected with the fact that the probability of their fatal termination had been just announced to her, is sufficient to account for the rapid growth of devout feeling and genuine faith in her soul. This, however, cannot be the explanation. Conversion is always sudden or instantaneous. It takes place in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. Sinful man can only be in one of two states at the same time. He cannot be both dead and alive, or both under the law and under grace. If he be under the law he is 'condemned,' but if under grace, '*justified.*' At the moment of his conversion, whether it take place in infancy, childhood, manhood, or old age, he becomes a child of God. It is confessedly impossible to conceive of restitution from death to life as being the result of a slow process in which death is not actually recovered from, nor life actually restored.

Equally impossible is it to conceive of the soul's transition from spiritual death to spiritual life as of gradual operation. It is just in this matter as it was in the morning of creation. God has only to say, 'Let there be light,' and there is light. The conversion of Paul is an illustration of this. In the one moment he was the malignant enemy of the cross and its followers, and, in the next, the most devoted and magnanimous friend and advocate of both. The thief upon the cross is another illustration. But now he reviles the dying Saviour, and, in another second, his happy spirit speeds its way, as a grand trophy of Calvary's victory, in company with the Conqueror himself, into God's immediate presence. Such like, indeed, is the nature of every conversion. The fruits thereof are certainly not so quickly palpable, but the change itself on the nature of the sinner is equally instantaneous.

The idea that the change called 'conversion,' or 'the new birth,' is too vast to be accomplished all at once, seems to arise from confounding the *work* of sanctification with the *act* of regeneration. The two things are certainly inseparable, but at the same time distinct. The birth of an infant is one thing, its subsequent growth of body and mind is another. The Bible speaks of 'babes in Christ,' and of these babes rising up to 'the stature of perfect men in him.' In this view of the doctrine, we have a perfectly consistent representation of what Agnes considered to have been accomplished in her soul at this interesting

period of her life; and the rapid and glowing expansion of spiritual sentiments and desires within her are to be regarded as the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. Every conversion is *supernatural*. The sons of God are every one of them 'born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, *but of God.*' This spiritual birth, however, may have less of the appearance of its divine origin at one time than at others; when, for example, the life of piety is seen gradually to grow out of the regular and habitual rise of what are called 'the means of grace.' The conversion of the Hottentot is more surprising than that of the child of many prayers and much pious nurture and admonition, though both are alike divine in their cause. When the Spirit of God, therefore, comes to convert such a privileged person as Agnes had been, we need not wonder that with all the divinely-appointed materials lying, so to speak, to his hand—such as *Christ in the truth*—the intellectual appreciation of *Christ in the truth*—the disposition to regard *Christ in the truth* as the divine Saviour—and even the formal acknowledgment of *Christ in the truth* as her Lord and Mediator—materials, every one of which may be in existence, though as yet the vital spark has not fallen to vivify and organise them. In such a case, we need not wonder if, almost immediately on her having received the Holy Ghost, her sanctification appears in a forward, and flourishing, and hopeful condition. Everything was ready; nature, education,

the world, the Bible, and religious ordinances had all done their utmost; and by the time she was placed in the furnace, she had all the *appearance* of a christian—the polished marble of the mere statue—all the dead materials, in short, of the future temple which, on the descent of the divine afflatus, was lighted up with the beauties of holiness, and consecrated thereafter to the service and glory of her redeeming Lord.*

‘ Can aught beneath a power divine
The stubborn will subdue?
'Tis thine, Eternal Spirit, thine
To form the heart anew.

‘ 'Tis thine the passions to recall,
And upwards bid them rise,
And make the scales of error fall
From Reason's darkened eyes.

‘ To chase the shades of death away,
And bid the sinner live;
A beam of heaven—a vital ray—
'Tis thine alone to give.’

* See ‘The Hiding Place,’ chaps. viii. ix.

CHAPTER VII.

The Growth of Grace.

‘Cheer up your souls ;
Calmness will lead to Hope, and Hope to Faith,
And Faith unto that awful happiness
That walks unquaking through the shades of death,
Triumphant over Nature’s agony.’

JOHN WILSON.

‘FOR a long time,’ said Agnes to one of her brothers on the forenoon of next day (Thursday, 5th July), ‘I could not look but with terror on the cold, cold grave, far away from all I love. But now, through the rich grace of God, I have few fears. I rejoice that my doubts are dispelled, and that I am not tempted, as many saints have been. Even my father had his dark hour ; but he had a strong mind to bear him up, whereas I have a weak understanding, and am too great a sinner to have resisted long. Surely God has been very merciful to me. I should like to hear you read again that hymn on Faith. No, rather read to me a chapter from the Word of God ; I fear I am sinning in preferring any book to the Bible, which is the best of all books.’

While thus engaged, she was told that her aunt, Mrs Captain Wardlaw, had arrived. She received her with affectionate interest, and conversed freely with her upon the subject that was now uppermost in her mind. Mrs Wardlaw told her that her son John was with her, and asked if she had any objections to see him. She said, 'I have none. There is no need for any delicacy in admitting young people to see me now, when it is known that I am dying. For a while after I first dreaded danger, I was anxious to live and enjoy a little more of the world with you all; but I tremble now at the very idea of a return to it. I desire to be resigned to the will of God; but as I have no confidence in my own resolution, and might return to sinful courses, I would rather "depart, and be with Christ, which is far better."'

Excited and fatigued by this interview, she was left to obtain some repose; and when asked by a brother in the evening if she had got any sleep, she replied—

'No; no sleep now, George, without an opiate night and day. I feel somewhat easier at present, but I suffer much. May your death-bed be easier than mine! O that the Lord in his mercy would relieve me from pain, for the few days I have to live! Nevertheless I await his pleasure.'

She had been for some time in the habit of committing to memory every day a verse from the Bible with her brother William, to whom she said:

'As long as I am able, I will learn my daily verse

with you ; but I fear that will not be long. O how I now regret that I know so little of the contents of that blessed book !'

It is assuredly in the view of eternity that the Bible, as well as every other gracious privilege, is seen to most advantage. However indifferently we may have attended to its promises and its doctrines when in the full enjoyment of health and hope, they seldom fail in the end to receive from us their merited estimation. The soul which knows eternity to be near, finds no security equal to that given by the word of the Lord. After comfort from this divine source, it never fails earnestly to inquire ; all other refuges are found to be lies, and one promise from the holy oracles has more weight than all the worldly comforts which can be offered. By neglecting to read this book, and to furnish the mind with its precious instruction, many, when they come to die, find themselves wandering, as it were, without a guide. They are in darkness, and they cannot find a lamp ; they are in the swellings of conscience, but they have no oil wherewith to smooth down those dark and stormy waters ; they are driven to and fro upon a sea of doubts, but they have no pilot to assist them in weathering the tempest, and bring them into a haven of peace. To secure to ourselves all the advantages of a correct and full acquaintance with scripture, there is not a better plan than that which Agnes adopted when she was dying, viz., committing to memory every day one verse at least.

Some do this by taking the verses in the order of succession; but it would be better to *select* passages fraught with consolation, and which contain the grounds of our hope through Christ's blood. It would be more profitable, for instance, to learn a promise of scripture every day, than take the risk of the other, which, we believe, is the American plan, but which may not lodge in the memory more than one or two seasonable and suitable passages for days, or even weeks. If the christian should live to old age, having thus habituated himself from his youth, it is not difficult to perceive that he shall become the possessor of a mine of comfort which will render him not only independent of the attentions of others, but which will, in a great measure, supply the loss of external sense, and of absence, through infirmity, from public ordinances.

On the day after this (Friday, 6th July,) Agnes suffered much from acute pain. This continued from morning to evening. When she obtained a little ease, she said to William, who was beside her:

‘How little have I thought of good things to-day! O that God would quicken my soul to have more delight in reflecting upon the love of Christ! I fear I am indulging in too great security; for if I were really a child of God, I think I could not so often forget him, nor so much repine under my sufferings.’

It was remarked to her, that she had great reason for thankfulness that she continued quite sensible,

when often on a bed of sickness the poor sufferer could neither understand nor apply the offers of mercy. She answered :

‘Yes; and my mercies are so numerous that my sin shall be the more aggravated, if I do not glorify God for them.’

On Saturday, the 7th July, she was rather easier; consequently a great part of the day was taken up with religious exercises and conversations. Towards evening, her mind became unusually elevated; her conceptions of the glories of her Redeemer were grand, and her manner of expressing herself exceedingly impressive. Once or twice, her triumphant bursts took them by surprise, and thrilled them with holy delight. These passages, however, could not be taken down. The following was the conclusion of one of them:—
‘When I go to heaven—as I now trust I shall—be sure you all follow me; and even though I should not go, I hope you will; but surely I too shall be there. It is sinful in me any more to doubt of my salvation. O my dear brothers! I entreat you, be decidedly religious. Choose ye *this day* whom ye shall serve. Boast not of to-morrow, for you know not what a day may bring forth; and place no confidence in the work of a death-bed repentance. What if you be cut off without a moment for preparation! True, he hath not so dealt with me. Here I have been born again. To John, under God, I am indebted for my conversion. O how my heart swells with gratitude to my Saviour for all

his mercies towards me, a sinner! What a blessed Redeemer is mine! How great is his beauty, and how great is his goodness! In him, and in him alone, I have put my trust; and he is worthy of far more confidence than I can give; for he loved me, and gave himself for me. What a religion—what a faith is the christian's! O Calvary—Calvary—wonderful Calvary!*

Here her face was lighted up with a look of triumph; and as she observed them in tears around her bed, she continued, 'Do not weep for me. You have no reason whatever to weep for me. When I go to heaven, shall I not be infinitely happier? Think of the unsearchable riches of Christ, of which I shall then be in full and rapturous possession! Do not weep for me.'

She had decided on committing to memory the hymn on faith, and she asked her brother to read it slowly over to her, verse by verse, for this purpose. When this was done, she requested that he would select and write out for her a few of the more appropriate texts of scripture, that he might be ready, at any time of need, to repeat them at once in her hearing; 'for,' she said, 'the Word of God is quick and powerful.'

The next day (Sabbath the 8th) she was again privileged with considerable relief from acute suffering.

* See 'The Hiding Place,' p. 125.

She enjoyed some pleasing conversation with her eldest brother, who had come to hear and see her. Observing that he was grieving, she desired him to read to her the hymn beginning—

‘Take comfort, christians, when your friends
 In Jesus fall asleep ;
 Their better being never ends,
 Why then dejected weep?’

And on his doing so, she said, ‘Now, let us sing together the twenty-third Psalm.’ When praise was finished, she asked for writing materials, and wrote down the whole of that psalm, as she complained that some lines of it had escaped her memory. After doing this, she delighted them all by immediately engaging in prayer. To their surprise, they found she was employing for this purpose the words of the 102nd Psalm, which she repeated from beginning to end with accuracy and with solemnising emphasis. When she had finished, she became silent and indisposed for conversation. In the evening she revived, and again dwelt much upon her approaching departure from this world, and upon the felicities of the new Jerusalem. A return of pain checked her in this course, and, with considerable force of expression, she exclaimed—

‘O, what a happy change from *this* to heaven! This may be my last Sabbath on earth; I may spend the next with my Redeemer, with my father and mother, and with the spirits of the just. O

blessed Jesus! I believe—help mine unbelief! My hopes all rest on thy infinite worthiness; not in mine innocence I trust, but in Christ, in him alone. Christ suffered for me, the just for the unjust; he has a fellow feeling with me; he will—I *know* he will work out my salvation.*

At her request, the fifty-first Psalm was again read, and part of the hymn was sung, beginning—

‘The saints of God, from death set free,
With joy shall mount on high,’ etc.

For the first time, this evening she manifested some anxiety to know how long she was likely to live, and was rather displeased when the question was evaded. She tried various ways of ascertaining it, not only by frequent inquiries at those in the house, but at others who were admitted to see her.

‘Do tell me,’ she said, as they were bidding her good night, ‘do you fear anything soon? What do the doctors think? Do they fix a day, or two days, or a week, or what?—do tell me.’

‘We cannot tell; you are in the hands of a kind God.’

‘I know it, and am resigned; but it would gratify me if you would tell me.’

‘It may be soon, and, from your weak condition, it may be sooner than is anticipated.’

‘Well, be it so,’ she replied, smiling. ‘I thank my

* See ‘The Hiding Place,’ p. 127.

God that he has not overwhelmed me with fears. My death-bed looked terrible at a distance; but on Christ my hope is fixed; hence my composure now.' Having repeated one of her favourite hymns, her nurse prepared her for the night. It pleased God to give her some sleep, so that, on the following day (Monday, 9th,) she was somewhat easy, and improved it accordingly. In the evening she was promised some particular quality of bread 'to-morrow.'

'Do not speak of to-morrow,' was her reply. 'I do not look so far forward—my time is very uncertain. You do not know how soon we may have to part. I used often to think, which of our family would die first; and I fancied, when there were six brothers and but one sister, that surely the sister would not be the first. I do not doubt, however, but that God has wise and merciful purposes to serve by it; and I thank him for bringing me so soon and in safety to my journey's end. Perhaps, ere another Monday, this may be a dreary room to you all—here I may be stretched out a cold corpse; but you shall only see my body—a piece of lifeless clay. My soul will have taken its happy flight—to—to—perhaps—I hope—to heaven! What a change! You weeping here, and taking farewell looks of me—I singing yonder, and gazing upon the glorified Jesus!'

'It shall indeed be sad to us, though joyful to you, Agnes.'

'Yes; but you must be resigned. I can now think

of my death—of my funeral—of my grave, without an unpleasant feeling. What a number of brothers will carry me to my grave! I think I am highly honoured in being the first among you to go to heaven. But time is short, and I must not waste it; bring the Bible and read to me from its precious pages: I need it all to study for eternity.'

As they were reading, she cried out from pain, 'Help me, William, O help me: I cannot do without your help!' She quickly checked herself—'But what am I saying? it is God that afflicts me, and God alone can help me.'

JULY 10, TUESDAY.—Having concluded the services peculiar to a sacramental occasion in Scotland, I left Kincardine this morning for Edinburgh, and in a few hours I was again at my place beside this beloved sufferer. I had heard of her welfare during the interval, and rejoiced to know of her increasing comfort in the prospect of death; but I was particularly impressed with the accounts of her occasional bursts of holy rapture, and hoped to be favoured to hear one of them. I have hinted that in this I was disappointed. I found her at this time in an exceedingly low condition, weaker than I had ever seen her. She could scarcely whisper, but she gave me her wonted welcome—a smile that told enough. I bent towards her to catch her feeble speech:—

'I am very glad to see you again. I hope you got comfortably through with the holy communion.'

‘Yes,’ I said; ‘the Lord of the ordinance has been very kind to me.’

‘And to me too,’ she replied.

‘Though anxious about you, he was a very present help.’

‘I was sure he would be that. Will you repeat to me what you can remember of the comforting things you said or heard at the Lord’s table?’

I then gave her an outline of the discourse I preached before the communion, from these words: ‘The precious blood of Christ.’ Great was her comfort, from the views which I now gave her of that wonderful ‘fountain.’ As I spoke of the eternal Father, who opened it up—of the eternal Son, out of whose heart it flowed—of the eternal Spirit, who applies its healing streams to sin-stricken souls—and of poor guilty sinners, as the objects for whose purity it was provided, her looks told how satisfied was her thirsty spirit. She took special delight in talking over the precious *properties* of this blood of atonement. She gloried in its *rarity*—the most precious of metals not being so rare—and its being found nowhere but in the Lord Jesus Christ. She gloried in its *intrinsic value*, in this respect infinitely surpassing mere gold or silver, or the precious stones of the lapidary, which derive their importance simply from their scarcity, and lose it when they become plentiful. But the blood of Christ is not dependent for its excellence upon its relative positions: being divine and atoning blood, it is, and must be, of

essential and infinite worth. She gloried in the *high estimation* in which it has been held by all competent judges, from the patriarchs, prophets, and righteous men of old, down to the apostles, martyrs, and confessors of later periods; yea, from the spirits before the throne on high, and the angels, who join them in ascribing worthiness to the Lamb who was slain, up to the great God himself, who, in consequence of his shedding it, is now imploring the world to be reconciled to him through ‘the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto us.’ And she gloried in the *gracious purposes* which it accomplishes as *propitiatory* blood, securing the justification of the sinner; as *peace-making* blood, speaking ‘better things than the blood of Abel;’ slaying the enmity between God and man, and bringing *nigh* those who had been ‘*afar off*’: for it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself;’ as *purifying* blood, which ‘purges the conscience from dead works,’ making even the most defiled spirit ‘whiter than snow,’ and an appropriate temple even for the Holy Ghost himself; and as *sealing* blood, ratifying not only the covenant of the olden times, but specially that of the new economy, being, according to Paul, ‘the blood of the testament,’ and according to Jesus himself, in the institution of the Lord’s Supper, the cup which is ‘the new testament in his blood shed for the remission of sins

unto many.' From gospel streams like these she imbibed not only great consolation, but great faith. From gospel lamps like these the whole valley was now almost in a perpetual blaze of light, and, with the exception of a passing cloud now and then, so it continued to be till she gave up the ghost.*

In the afternoon we had a pleasing subject of conversation. Reverting to what had been my privilege on the Sabbath, she remarked :

'I am often grieved when I think of the length of time I delayed being a member of the church, of my want of proper self-examination beforehand, and of my spiritual deadness when I first sat down at our Lord's table. O how weak, how very weak was my love to Christ then! But I just comfort myself with this thought, that he has forgotten the past, and that though I cannot love him aright in this frail tabernacle, I will be enabled to love him even according to his own pleasure after I am dead.'

'It is indeed glorious to think of our being made *perfect* then—perfect in happiness—perfect in knowledge—perfect in holiness! What grand company, too, we shall have! You shall soon be with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.'

'Yes, John,' she said, interrupting me, 'and WITH CHRIST! WITH CHRIST!'

'Should not the prospect of such felicity reconcile us to all the ills of life?'

* See 'The Hiding Place,' pp. 232-237.

‘It should,’ she replied. ‘I feel sure that heaven will be all the glorious and happy place God’s word promises. It is true we know little about it; “for eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him; but what we know not now we shall know hereafter.”’

As she partook of some food, I said that ‘in heaven we shall, in all probability, be freed from the craving of these appetites.’

‘Yes,’ she said, ‘there we shall “hunger no more, neither thirst any more.”’

‘One finds it difficult,’ I remarked, ‘to realise for one’s self the actual possession of such blessedness. It is reported, that, when an old disciple of the cross was dying, he thus expressed himself:—“When I go to heaven—if I ever reach it—there are three things which will make me wonder: first, to find many there whom I did not expect to see; second, to find some absent whom I did expect to see; but the third and last wonder of all shall be, *to find myself there—me there—me there!*”’

‘Yes,’ she said; ‘but worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive all the honour and the praise; and when we get there, it will be because *he is there* as our forerunner and representative.’

Having put the quill into her mouth, from which she sucked up some wine and water, I called her attention to that remarkable passage in the life of

Jesus, when he cried out, 'I thirst!' and was only mocked with the offer of gall and vinegar. Her eye immediately gathered up its former fire and expression; she allowed the spoon to drop from her hand, and, closing it firmly, she raised it up as in defiance, and with great feeling exclaimed—

'Wonderful! O how wonderful! And this was the Son of God—the Lord of angels—the King of kings—the Creator, who was so insulted, and who could have crushed these his enemies with a look!'

I now told her the following anecdote in connection with this subject:—Not many years ago, on a particular occasion, the Lord's Supper was dispensed in the church of Bridge-of-Teith, when the venerable father of the present Dr Fletcher of London was its pastor. To accommodate the multitudes who flocked thither at such times, a field-tent had been erected in the park behind the church, which was successively occupied during the Sabbath by the different ministers who were present at the communion. It was a beautiful summer afternoon. The sun was unclouded, and the heat was intense. The river Teith rolled past in all its Highland grandeur, dashing against the old arches of the romantic bridge which gives its name to the locality, and which formed, along with the stately trees on its banks, shelter from the sun's rays to many of the congregation assembled there to hear the gospel. There was an unusual stir at one period of the day, and the people were seen rushing to the

tent. A favourite preacher had ascended. He read out his text—‘After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, *I thirst.*’ From this, among many other pathetic allusions to the sufferings of the Son of Mary, the preacher took occasion to speak of the exquisite pain occasioned by thirst, and then gave a touching description of our blessed Saviour’s sufferings from it on the cross. Not a sound was heard, save the gurgling of the Teith, and occasionally the notes of the birds on surrounding branches. The audience was profoundly still, and every eye was fixed on the tent, when, in the midst of this melting passage, the commanding figure of the minister was seen to turn round, and with these words he addressed the flowing stream: ‘Where, where were then thy waters, O Teith, when the Lord of Nature, who bade thee flow, could not obtain so much as one drop to cool his parched tongue? Wonder, O ye heavens, and be amazed, O earth—thy Creator exclaims, “*I THIRST!*”’

Agnes was much affected by this simple story, and became more so when she was told that the preacher on the occasion was her own father. Though generally fastidious enough in her estimate of the pulpit style of oratory, she considered the appeal in this apostrophe to be exceedingly fine, and in the circumstances both natural and proper. She now, for the first time since her illness, alluded to the happiness she had expected from residing with me in the manse

at Kincardine. She said—‘We might have been very happy. I used often to fancy us two sitting together during the winter nights at the parlour fire, or walking by the shores of the Forth, or among the beautiful terraces of Tulliallan Castle, and the noble trees of its forest; and sometimes I figured our going down to the pier on a Saturday afternoon, to greet William, or some of the others, on their arrival by the steamer from Edinburgh. Ah! little did I think that such happiness was never to be mine. My prospects, indeed, in the world were never bright, but in these anticipations I was indeed happy. God, I believe, is doing all this for the best. He is taking me away from such sin and misery; and now I have glorious prospects of living in “the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” I do not wish to go back to the world to encounter Satan, who is an awful enemy, a roaring lion. At the same time, I am resigned—“Thy will, O God, be done!”’

She here told me of the kind visits she occasionally received from her own and her father’s friends, the Rev. Dr James Peddie, and the Rev. Dr John Brown, who had manifested the most affectionate concern for her ever since she had been laid down in the chamber of affliction, and continued to do so while she lived. Each visit drew from her, on their departure, the most sincere and meek expressions of thankfulness, not only to them, but to the Lord, who sent them to be her comforters. She had also that forenoon re-

ceived a second visit from Dr Halley. In giving an account of this interview with her, he says—

‘Mr Arnot came down on Sabbath evening, and told me that your sister was anxious to see me again. My own anxiety was equally great; for I can assure you I had reaped much experience, and derived much sincere pleasure, from my former visit. Of my second visit I may also say that it was profitable to us both. When I was leaving her she called me back, took my hand in hers, while her eye filled with tears, and said—“I think, Mr Halley, we two may say, as did the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, It has been good for us to be here.” She had slept better than usual during the preceding night, and was therefore able to converse with me more fluently. Her frame of mind was evidently greatly better, and she talked of the support she received from the consolations of the gospel, and of her assurance of an interest in Christ, in a manner which greatly delighted me. We had no time and no occasion for questions and answers at this interview; for the conversation flowed on in that delightful manner, unchecked and unembarrassed, that each of us supplied what we thought defective in the illustrations of the other. The chief part of it was occupied with heaven. We talked (and the idea seemed powerfully to strike her) of the surprise that a disembodied spirit must feel when released from this thin partition of clay, and

when the secrets of the invisible world are then disclosed. We spoke of the knowledge to which glorified beings should attain—of the stainless purity that shall belong to their souls when every impulse of the operations of sense shall be subdued, and when every internal conflict shall be terminated for ever. We talked of the happy reunion of the followers of Christ in another world, and here I alluded to her grandfather, her mother, and father. This tasked her sensibility too much; her eyes swam with tears. I apologised for alluding to it, when she immediately said—“O no, don't think it is that which pains me; it is the fact that my father offered up so many prayers for us all, that we might at last be brought to heaven; and I hope he shall soon find that his prayers have been answered in my experience.”

‘She spake of the great benefit she had derived from you, and attributed her conversion to your exertions, under the blessing of Heaven. She said it must no doubt be very pleasing for you to know this, and she desired me to tell you. The subject with which our conversation terminated on my former visit was then resumed. Having pointed out to her that Christ by his death had delivered his people from the condemning power of the law, and purchased for them mansions in heaven, she remarked—“I think I can say, Thanks be to God, that gave us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” She told me of the consolation she had recently enjoyed in prayer, and

said—"Though my outward man faileth, my inward man is renewed day by day." She also remarked—"How base and ungrateful is the conduct of those who try to set aside the truths of religion! What should I have been now, had I wanted these to cheer and comfort me?"

'But, my dear Sir, it would be vain, because impossible, to give you an account of all our conversation at this visit. One topic followed another so spontaneously, and the pleasure which each of us felt was so great, that after I had gone, I found the utmost difficulty in tasking my memory to many of the particular subjects in which we were engaged. I prayed with her, and promised to call on the following week.'

Dr Halley alludes in his interesting narrative to a circumstance in the history of this death-bed which to the writer is unusually interesting—the conversion of Agnes. On this same evening she herself introduced it. I had given to her to read an old edition of the works of Willison of Dundee, author of 'The Afflicted Man's Companion.' Next to her Bible, she prized this quaint but precious writer. Much rich consolation did she receive from his heavenly mind. At this time I took up the volume, and at her request read a portion of it. On laying it down, it occurred to me to ask her if my own efforts to comfort and guide her mind had been useful to her during her illness. She

looked at me for a moment or two, and, with great earnestness in her manner, said—

‘Yes; you have been the foundation, the beginning—you have been the means, under God, of bringing me to Christ—to heaven. O John, what a blessed thing it must be for you to have saved one soul from death!’ The subject was not prolonged, and I have no other remark to make upon it than this—*If it be so*, ‘not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be all the glory.’

Agnes spoke a good deal about the kind friends who occasionally visited her. She was truly a grateful creature. To Mrs Arnot especially, a lady who acted towards her a mother’s part during the time of her illness, she cherished all the affection of a daughter; and many a blessing upon her and her family did she earnestly implore. She was also much cheered and strengthened by the visits of a young female friend, now the estimable lady of the Rev. Mr Cunningham of the Free Church of Blair-Lodge, who with the most delicate fidelity helped to guide her on the way to heaven. There is therefore a propriety in now inserting Mrs Cunningham’s own impressions of Agnes’ dying experience at this stage of her trying ordeal. She thus writes:—

‘During the first two visits I paid your truly interesting sister, after Miss Abercrombie told me of her state, I endeavoured to speak to her of the need of a

Saviour, and of the loud voice there was in all sickness and sorrow, calling upon us to bow unto God, and to seek for a physician both for soul and body. She seemed to assent but coldly, and got much more animated when we talked of other things. For ten days or so after this she became much worse, and unable to see me. When I was admitted next, I saw that she looked much more feeble; but I can never forget the delight I felt, after a little conversation, to see the change that had taken place in her mind. She asked her nurse to go out, as she wished to have a little private conversation with me. She then told me that she had opened her mind to you in a way that she had never done before, and that you had given her some sweet text to comfort her in every difficulty. She was afraid that you were too comforting to such a sinner as she was. I said, "We need not fear to trust in comforts that come from the Word of God." She replied, "I know that; but still I have heard of many righteous people who had much fears about their souls, so that I wonder at my own peace."

'I wished to know if she now thought she was dying, and said, after being so often disappointed in seeing her, I feared she was even worse, and that I might never have seen her again. She said, "God only knows what shall be the end of this; but I now think I am dying. Once it appeared very terrible to me to be laid in the lonesome grave—to have done with this world, and be parted from my dear

brothers and friends; but now, that thought never troubles me—it is only *this*, What will become of my soul?”

‘She said she sometimes felt afraid that she might be deceiving herself, and not truly believing in Christ. I said she might try herself in one way—if Christ were precious to her, for “to them that believe he is precious;” but many thought they believed in him who never felt his value. She said, “I fear I do not love him as I ought.” I asked her if she would give up the hope she had in Christ for the promise of long life, health, and prosperity. She gave me one of her sweet, animated smiles, and said, “O no! Small as my hold is, I would not give it up for the whole world. I feel my heart so deceitful, I would be afraid to return to the world; I might be drawn away to vanity and forgetfulness of God. I think God has shown great mercy to me in laying me on a bed of sickness, and calling my mind to religion now; for if I had lived to grow old in the careless state in which once I was, my heart must have grown so bad, that it might never have been changed.” She added, “When I hear people talk of a new heart, and being born again, I fear there is not such a change in me as they describe.” I advised her to examine if she felt any difference in her feelings with regard to God’s word and his people. She said, “I feel a very great difference. Till very lately, I did not care about seeing and conversing with ministers; now, I count it my greatest

delight, and I do not wish to have intercourse with those who do not speak to me of heavenly things." She always wished that we should unite in prayer before we parted, and generally she asked me earnestly to remember her at a throne of grace at home, and gave me some texts of scripture to think on after I left her. I only remember two of them: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much;" and, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief." She had a verse always ready to give me when she knew I was coming. She gradually became more frank, and spoke to me freely of the change she was looking for, and I may say hastening to. She only feared that she might wish for death too much in order to be relieved from suffering; and her desire was to wish for it only that she might be with Jesus, who had shown so much love, and suffered so much for her. It gave her great pleasure to think that her father and mother had been pious, and what a happy thing it would be for a family to meet in heaven. At times, her bodily sufferings were so great that she could scarcely speak, but she seemed in the time of her adversity to consider her mercies; for she used often to say, "O, what would have been my state but for religion; and what a mercy it is I have the use of my reason, and such kind brothers, and an attentive, good nurse!" Her patience was really very beautiful, and the interest

she expressed for the spiritual welfare of her school-fellows, showed how much she valued the soul. She used to say, "WHAT SHALL ALL THIS EDUCATION PROFIT THEM ON A DYING BED WITHOUT CHRIST? I WISH I HAD SPENT THE DAYS OF MY HEALTH IN HIS SERVICE—IT SEEMS TO ME SO SHOCKING TO GIVE ONLY A TIME OF SICKNESS TO SO KIND AND GOOD A SAVIOUR."

'One day when she was very uneasy, she desired me to pray that the pains of her body might not take her mind off heavenly things, for she felt distressed that anything should come between her and her God. She hoped it would please God to give me an easier death-bed, if it was for my good; but she was sure God did not send her one unnecessary pain, and she had now nothing to do but to look straight into heaven; and she trusted that Christ would carry her safely through the last trial.

'The last time but one that I saw her, she asked me if I thought she appeared to be near death. I said I thought she did. She then asked me, did I think it might be in two days. I said it seemed to me as if it would be so, but that I had had little experience in seeing sick people. She then said in a most lively manner, "O Miss Jeffrey, you have indeed given me a ray of comfort this evening!"' *

* See 'The Hiding Place,' chap. x.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Fruits of Peace.

‘ Though afflicted, tempest-tost,
 Comfortless awhile thou art ;
Do not think thou canst be lost ;
 Thou art graven on my heart !
All thy wastes I will repair ;
 Thou shalt be rebuilt anew ;
And in thee it shall appear
 What a God of Love can do.’

WE were reading this afternoon (Wednesday, 11th July,) out of Willison’s ‘Meditations for Dying Persons,’ which, after the Bible, was ever her favourite book. She said :

‘ There is a fine thought in the passage you have read.’

‘ Which passage do you mean ?’

‘ This one : “ O that the night of my death may shine bright with the sparkling stars of heavenly graces ! ” I pray that it may be so with me.’

‘ In the darkness of your night of death, I do think some such lights have appeared,’ was my reply.

She quietly shook her head, and said :

‘I should like you to pray with me now.’ Having done so, she remarked—‘That is a fine prayer; you have remembered everything.’

‘The Saviour has promised,’ I replied, ‘to send to us the Spirit to teach us all things, and to bring all things to our remembrance.’

‘Hence,’ she added, ‘I discover that I have many things to pray for, of which till now I never thought.’

‘This is our consolation, Agnes, that our Father knoweth what things we have need of even before we ask him.’

‘O what a book is this Bible!’ she exclaimed: ‘“Thy testimonies are wonderful; therefore doth my soul keep them. The entrance of thy words giveth light.”’

After a pause: ‘Can this be death; and I am so calm and composed? Can I be humble enough; am I grieved enough for my sins—my ingratitude?’

‘You need not wonder if the mighty power of God divest death of its terrors. It should rather be wonderful if, trusting in his grace, you found it to be otherwise. Has he not said, “As thy days, so shall thy strength be?”’

‘O tell me, am I not sinning in being thus able to speak of death and realise eternity without trembling?’

‘No, no,’ I replied, alarmed at this indication of the returning clouds; ‘the reverse would be sinful. God

is with you, and how can it be otherwise? He has commanded, "*Fear not,*" and you have obeyed; is there sin in obeying God? Be firm, hold fast your confidence—resist the devil: you are built upon the Rock of Ages, against which the gates of hell cannot prevail.'

'O my God,' she cried, 'be with me when death actually comes!'

The '*Night*' was now getting darker, and fearing lest we should stumble, I took up the Bible.

'Hear,' I said, 'the answer to your prayer: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flames kindle upon thee; for I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour." *'

She *looked* more confident, and bade me proceed. I asked, 'What shall I say more?'

'Speak to me about Christ,' she answered; 'about Christ, and his willingness to save.'

After I had done so for some time, I again asked, 'What shall I speak about now?'

She became thoughtful, seemed to be somewhat perplexed, and then replied:

'There are so many topics that I relish, I do not know which to select.'

She thought again and again, and at length, as

* See 'The Hiding Place,' chap. xvi.

if relieved, she replied—‘Just about Christ still, and about the power of his blood to save. That blood can save: I hope it has saved me.’

I spoke about Christ, about the glories of his person, the sweetness of his love, and the efficacy of his grace; and as I spoke, the clouds disappeared.

‘I am now prepared to hear you tell me when it is thought I shall die. Is this to be lingering, or am I to die soon?’ was her next question.

‘I once read,’ I answered, ‘of a good woman, who, when asked whether she preferred to live or die, replied, “I have no choice in this matter, but refer myself to the will of God.” It was rejoined to her, If God refer it to yourself, which would you prefer? “If God were to refer it to me,” said she, “I would just refer it back again to him.”’

‘Well, John, did I not say, “The will of the Lord be done?”’

She then requested me to draw a little nearer to her, as she had something to say which she wished me alone to hear. She whispered:

‘I have been thinking of my burial, and of the place where you may lay me; and have formed a wish upon the subject.’

‘If practicable, your wish shall be attended to.’

‘Then take my body over to Dunfermline, and let me be buried in the Abbey churchyard, beside my father and mother.’

I made the promise, and she seemed much pleased,

and then suggested that it was time to have family prayers. 'That you may *pray* longer,' she said, '*sing fewer verses.*' I said, 'God is worthy of much praise.' She made no reply. We sung two verses of a hymn. When I was about to shut the book, she signified to me that I was to proceed. We sung another, and I again was closing the book, when again she signified to me to go on, and a fourth was sung. Thus my remark had impressed her. After prayer, she again began to mourn over her sins, and to express her fears about the genuineness of her repentance. An exposition of Isaiah i. 18 restored her peace.

'Tis a sweet verse indeed,' she said, 'and I will try and hold by it. When I am gone, some in the world will say, "Poor girl! what a pity it is that she should have been so soon cut off—so young and so happy!" Poor girl, indeed! I joy and rejoice in the prospect; to me it is now matter of daily praise.'

Thus it will be seen that during this day she was much exercised in godly jealousy, and not a little inclined to despond; but, by the grace of God, she revived.

JULY 12, THURSDAY.—Agnes had changed the position this evening in which for some days she had lain. I found her consequently in great distress. The tears were streaming down her cheeks from pain, and deep and long were her moanings.

‘This is awful suffering,’ she said, as she observed me at her bedside.

“‘This is the will of God in Christ concerning you, even your sanctification,’” I replied.

‘It is even so,’ said she, trying to smile.

An opiate partially relieved her, and, as usual, we improved the opportunity by reading portions of the scripture, and engaging in prayer. Immediately after, I heard her feelingly repeating to herself these beautiful lines :—

‘Father, whate’er of earthly bliss
Thy sovereign will denies,
Accepted at a throne of grace
Let this petition rise :—

‘Give me a calm and thankful heart,
From every murmur free ;
The blessings of thy grace impart,
And let me live to thee.

‘Let the sweet hope that thou art mine
My life and death attend ;
Thy presence through my journey shine,
And crown my journey’s end.’

This was one of those hymns which, as a form of prayer, she oft employed. Many, many times were these sweet but simple verses repeated by her during the silent hours of suffering and solitary nights, when she was alone with the Father. Her condition at this time was so pitiful, that I could not but admire the divine grace which disposed this meek and patient creature thus to address her God, whose rod was

lying so weightily upon his child. Such were her sufferings throughout this day, that no further opportunity was afforded for conversation. 'Pray for me,' she said, as I left her; 'that, in the midst of paroxysms of pain, I may not forget resignation to God. I sometimes do; but when a moment of ease comes, I ask his pardon, and give thanks.'

JULY 13, FRIDAY.—To our deep regret, she was again this afternoon, after another sleepless night, under the cloud. Earnestly did I pray that she might be 'held up,' and not permitted to wander into 'slippery places.'

'O my dear brother,' she said, when she saw me, 'I hope I'll get to heaven!'

'All do get there who die "in Christ Jesus."'

'But what am I?—a forgetful, negligent, dead creature.'

'God,' I replied, 'does not judge us harshly as we do ourselves. I believe that there shall be wonderful discoveries, at the last day, of some on the right hand who doomed themselves to the left, and of some on the left who expected the right.'

'But I am so cold often, and so useless.'

'You are doing your Father great injustice. He does not look for the same amount of active service from the afflicted that he does from the sound in health and mind. Consider an earthly parent; he does not require the same attentions from his sickly as from his romping child.'

‘It is all very true; but still I feel that I am very ungrateful.’

‘Do you not love Jesus?’ ‘I hope I do,’ she replied, ‘but not as I ought. I will tell you what I do: I implore him to draw me closer to himself, for I cannot *cling* to him, I am so weak.’

‘What does he say?’ ‘I love them that love me.’ Do you believe that?’

‘True; but what is also said? “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha.” We are not at liberty to disregard the Bible threatenings any more than the Bible promises; and terrible are its threatenings. O, they make me tremble!’

Away and away did I now carry her from promise to promise; and, as their brilliant coruscations fell athwart her path, her soul again magnified the Word of God. But she was exhausted with the exercise, and I offered to leave her alone. She called after me in a most imploring manner—

‘Do not leave me. The *soul* should be the first concern. Be with me much to-day. Pray that Jesus may be with me in death, and that, when I at last enter upon the dark waters of Jordan, he will take me up in his arms and carry me safely through. Oh, I never thought a death-bed should be like this! But neither did I know that to me it should have had so few terrors!’

‘And what has dissipated its terrors?’

‘The Bible, and faith in its doctrines—Christ and his cross—yes, Christ has done it—none and nothing but Christ.’

‘When you think of your past life and all its vanities, of God, and your forgetfulness of him, are you still grieved?’

‘My greatest grief is that I grieve so little.’

‘And what is your greatest joy?’

‘That “a broken and a contrite heart God will not despise.”’

JULY 14, SATURDAY.—It was occasionally a painful and difficult duty to get her mind to rest upon this good hope—that she was certain to enjoy the divine presence *to the end*, and to be admitted into heaven *at the end* of her pilgrimage. As far as can be remembered, it might be about this time that she fell into a somewhat desponding state. I remarked it, and she admitted it. I asked her to tell me, if she could, why she should thus let go her confidence. She replied: ‘I would rather be helped to rise again to the sense of former joys.’

‘What,’ I inquired, ‘are your fears?’

‘Chiefly,’ she answered, ‘that, after all, *I may not be believing*. I wish I could persuade myself that I actually have that faith which is inseparable from eternal life.’

‘I have often endeavoured,’ was my reply, ‘to satisfy you on that point, and I will do so now. I think it is not at all improbable that a text or two of

the Word of God will completely serve the purpose. His word "is quick and powerful,"—the entrance of his word "gives light,"—hitherto it has indeed been "a lamp to your feet."

'It has; but I mourn sometimes over *light* that has gone out, and joys that have left me.'

'Do you wish me at present to raise an argument with you out of scripture, to prove that you are a believer?'

'I do, most anxiously,' was her reply.

'Well, will you promise to take the comfort out of it?'

'Certainly, if I can; and his grace is sufficient.'

'Do you think,' I asked, 'that if the heart feels Christ to be truly valuable—to be an inestimably rich treasure—that it can be an unbelieving heart?'

'One may have vague ideas,' she replied, 'about Christ's work, and yet not be savingly interested in his righteousness.'

'This is true,' was my answer; 'but do you think that the Saviour can be so highly prized as you prize him, unless there be some spiritual vision of his beauty, and spiritual experience of his worth?'

'That is just the very thing which I should like to have proved to me,' she answered.

'Here, then, is the proof, in the first epistle of Peter, second chapter and seventh verse: "*Unto you, therefore, who believe he is precious.*" If this text mean anything at all, it means that all who are

conscious to themselves that Christ is precious, are *believing*; and that none believe who do not esteem him as such. Is Christ, then, precious to your soul?

‘He certainly is; I am lost without him.’

‘If, then, he be thus precious to you, you must have faith. Would you, for any consideration whatever, consent to forsake the Saviour, and cast away all your confidence in him—would you renounce his cross for worlds?’

‘No, no,’ she said; ‘not for the universe.’

‘I think, then, that you are complimenting poor depraved human nature too highly, by supposing for a moment that you can have such an estimate of the Redeemer, entirely independent of that faith which is “the gift of God.” He is precious to you, and you do believe.’

‘O to be fully assured of it!’ was her aspiration.

‘May I ask you,’ I rejoined, ‘if you have your hopes of pardon in any degree founded upon your own good works, such as repentance, prayer, profession, charity, or any piece of self-righteousness whatever?’

‘I am sure I have not,’ she answered. ‘All my hope is in the mercy of God—the free and the rich mercy of God.’

‘Hear, then, what God says to you in reference to that state of mind; it is expressed in Psalm cxlvii. 11: “The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, *in those that hope in his mercy.*” You have confessed

that your hope is nowhere else than in his mercy, and I believe you; but God has declared that he has pleasure in all who do so—that is, in *you*; and I believe him.’

‘This is exceedingly comfortable,’ she replied. ‘What a thought! The Lord, the great Jehovah, *taketh pleasure* in me—in a poor sinner like me! It is, indeed, most encouraging.’

‘Do you feel your confidence somewhat restored?’

‘I think I do. I thank you cordially. You are, indeed, a great comfort to me. I shall not forget these two verses: “Unto you, therefore, who believe he is precious;” and, “The Lord *taketh pleasure* in them that fear him; in those that hope in his mercy.”’

This forenoon I bade her farewell, as I had to leave for Kinross, to assist the late Dr Hay at the dispensation of the Lord’s Supper. Her manner in parting with me told that she thought it likely we might never meet again on earth. It was very affecting, but kept under by proper restraint; nature was moved, but grace poured its oil on the troubled spirit, and we parted in peace and in hope. I had not long gone when she was visited by Mr Law of Dunfermline. Though in great pain all the time he was with her, she gave a proof of her attention, after he left, which pleased us greatly. She said to her brother William:

‘I have been much comforted with Mr Law’s kind visit, especially with his prayer. It was beautiful indeed. I will repeat part of it to you:—

“O Lord, should this be death, may it be a fulfilment of Christ’s *promise*, ‘Yet a little while and ye shall not see me; but I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.’ But if this be death, may it be an answer to Christ’s *prayer*, ‘Father, 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.’ But if this be death, may it be a response to Christ’s *invitation*, ‘Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away; for lo the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.’”

Visits this day also from her eldest brother and her beloved aunt, Mrs Dewar, greatly refreshed her. As these dear friends sat beside her, she said—‘The day of my death may be one of sorrow to you, but it will be a happy day to me. John has been the means of saving my soul; *he* has been God’s instrument, and he will be blessed for it yet. What a joy it must impart to him to think that he has saved *one* soul!’

JULY 15, SABBATH.—This day was passed in comparative ease. Her mind rested on Christ, and rejoiced in the hope of the approaching everlasting Sabbath in ‘the country which is an heavenly.’

JULY 16, MONDAY.—I returned to-day from Kin-

ross. On my questioning her as to how she had been since I left her, she said—‘I have had my usual wearisome days and nights. Last night I had less pain, and some delightful reflections. Frequently when about to fall into slumber, I would awake repeating some consolatory texts which I did not know I could repeat. How gracious and good is the Lord to me!’

Again she said—‘I have a strong desire to die this very night, if it were the will of God; but “his will be done.”’

She received two ministerial visits in the course of the day—the one from the Rev. Dr Smith of Biggar, and the other from Dr Halley. She said—‘I was impressed with one of Dr Smith’s remarks—“that I should be willing to suffer all that God sends, for this was just bearing part of Christ’s cross.” Yes, I should, especially when I consider the glory that is to follow.’

Dr Halley gives the following account of his interview:—

‘My third and last visit was paid to her on this Monday. She was very feeble that day, had slept very ill the preceding night, and her complaint evidently increased. When I called, she was asleep, and I informed your brother that I would call some other day. But he asked me to stop a short while, as she would soon be awake, which I did.

When I saw her I was struck with the change that a week had made in her features. Her voice was weak, and she was unfit for much exertion. I did not stop above ten minutes. As I had to go to the country for three weeks, I was impressed with the conviction that this would be my last visit to her, *as it was*. The love of Christ, and the extent and freeness of the divine forgiveness, were the subjects of my conversations with her, for she was able to talk very little herself. This was suggested by a sermon I had heard the preceding night, from Isaiah lv. 9: "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." I mentioned to her that the preacher had said that there were planets so distant that their light had not yet reached us, though they had shone from the morning of the creation. Yet vast as was the idea which this gave us of the extent of the heavens, the mercy of God was more boundless still. She seemed particularly struck with this thought, and said—

“God be merciful to me a sinner!”

‘I alluded to the language of scripture, in which God is said to blot out our transgressions. She said—“O may mine be blotted out, for Christ’s sake!” All her hopes were placed on the Saviour, and her mind appeared calm and tranquil. When I was leaving her after prayer, I said to her, “Farewell; if we do not meet again on earth, we shall

meet in heaven." To which she added, *with great promptitude*—

“Where the days of our mourning shall be ended.”

She was often disposed to question the righteousness of her motives in desiring to leave this world.

‘Can it be sinful?’ she inquired.

‘Paul,’ I answered, ‘was in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.’

‘Well, I will wait on the Lord; only I wish I could love Christ more than I do. Will you pray at present that my love to Christ may be increased?’

I complied with her request. ‘I heard it all,’ she said. ‘Yes, he himself will strengthen my attachment to him.’ After a pause she said—‘And this is dying. How incomprehensible and mysterious is the change at death! we cannot know it now.’ I repeated to her the verse, ‘Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.’

‘That,’ she said, ‘is one of the texts that occurred to me during last night.’ I said—

‘How glorious this truth, that we shall know even as we are known!’

‘Yes; here we cannot understand the full happiness of heaven. It is impossible that such sinful beings as

we are can understand how true happiness can consist in the *eternal praises* of God.'

Observing that she was inclined to sleep, I retired, but was scarcely gone when I was recalled. She took my hand, and in a very pitiful tone told me that she had suddenly become very uneasy, and thought that death might be near.

'O what I am suffering!'

'When Christ parted with his disciples,' I said, 'he forewarned them that they should have to endure much on his account.'

'Yes,' she replied, 'what he promised was this—
"In the world ye shall have tribulation." *His* will be done.'

At her request many passages of scripture were repeated, with which, as usual, she felt her mind strengthened. Afterwards her countenance assumed a most fascinating expression of calm trust; it was the very emblem of a meek and quiet spirit. While I engaged in this evening's family prayer, she was supported in the arms of one of her brothers, her head bending forward, and her body racked with pain. She endured it without a murmur, and as I prayed, her soul seemed to be enjoying perfect peace. A disciple of Jesus, she had been taught by the Lamb of God himself thus to suffer and thus to endure. Could philosophy, could worldly maxims, could natural fortitude have thus sustained her? Impossible. It is the heroism of the christian, imbibed at the foot of the

cross, that now shuts those pale lips, and lights up that eye with resignation even in this dark and troubled hour. ‘This is the victory that overcometh—even *her faith.*’

JULY 17, TUESDAY.—She experienced a very weak turn this forenoon. Mr Law of Dunfermline called, and gave her a soothing address and prayer. She made a great effort to keep up during his presence, but derived little comfort from his kind attention. We were impressed that she was dying, and watched at her couch.

‘Speak to me about Jesus. The time is short. I grieve that I cannot occupy it fully.’

I thought this a favourable time to propose the following question:—

‘Do you recollect any period of your life in which you began to think more seriously about religion and its great importance?’

‘No, I cannot say that I do. I certainly was sometimes more seriously impressed than at others—sometimes more regular at my morning and evening prayers, and in the reading of the Bible; and I uniformly found that the more regularly I discharged these duties, I was the less inclined to sin and wander from God. But in general it was a careless life. I might *say* my prayers, but no sooner had I left my closet than all was forgotten. I did not derive that real comfort from religion which now so powerfully supports me, because I did not then feel sin to be the

abominable thing I now feel it to be; nor did I then see Jesus to be the suitable Saviour I now see him to be. I did indeed make a profession, but it was nothing more; my heart was in this world and its follies; it was not given to God.'

'Is there any *text* which is your favourite?'

'No, there are so many, all so beautiful, and so consolatory.'

'Is there any doctrine of christianity upon which you specially delight to dwell?'

'My repose is upon the doctrines of the cross in general, specially, of course, on the *atonement of Christ for sin*. I am trusting to it for my soul's eternal life.'

Having prayed with her at her own request, she remarked—

'It is grand to be with God in prayer—he hears and he answers. I recollect well how your prayers sustained me during that *dark, dark week*, when my mind was tossed to and fro with doubts and fears. Your replies solved my doubts; your selection of appropriate scriptures dissipated my fears. I wish I could now recall these despondings, just that I might hear these passages and your explanations over again.'

She was easy in the afternoon, and, as she said, wished us to assist her in finishing her worldly business. Having got her books, portfolios, writing-desk, etc., placed in the bed, she gave minute instructions as to how all were to be disposed of, leaving her French

Testament to one, her English Bible to another, her pencil-case to a third, her eye-glass to a fourth, and great numbers of her drawings to her other acquaintances. To a young lady, one of her most attached companions, who, at her request, was arranging some articles of dress, she said with great sweetness,

‘Alison, do not weep—I hope soon to get better clothing.’

The composure—I could almost say the indifference—with which this scene was gone through, was remarkable. She greatly prized these things once; they were all now, in her estimation, ‘trifles light as air,’ compared with the *crown* she was expecting. No one could have suspected that she was dying, and parting for ever with what once she valued so much. When done with this work, she returned to another of a different description. As she set apart the tokens of regard she had reserved for her eldest brother, she said to me—

‘I am grieved on his account; he must soon be a widower; Janet is dying. Hers is a valuable life. It matters not to any though I die, for I am useless in this world; but I am vexed for poor James if she be taken away from him and her two dear infants. May the Lord have mercy on him!’

JULY 18, WEDNESDAY.—She employed part of this day in committing to memory some of her favourite hymns, and took great pleasure in frequently repeating them.

Some one had ventured to express the hope that she might yet be spared. I said, that in that case, it was as necessary to prepare for life as for death.

‘More so,’ she replied; ‘much more so;’ and she continued in a musing frame to repeat these words: ‘more so—much more so;’ indicating her impression that she dreaded return to the world more than death. The remainder of the evening was devoted to the reading of some of the Psalms, and the meditations of ‘sweet Willison.’

On the two following days, Thursday and Friday, she again suffered extremely from pain, and again fled to prayer in her time of need.

‘You seem to have much pleasure in prayer,’ I said.

‘Yes; I like to be always asking, for I am always needing; besides, it is they that ask who receive.’

She requested me to converse with her about *death*, ‘lest,’ she said, ‘I forget that I am dying.’ Then she suggested that *heaven* should be the next subject of conversation, saying with her wonted animation, ‘What a mysterious place it is! We always suppose it to be above us. This may arise from our ideas of its exalted grandeur, and superiority even to the most splendid orbs of the firmament. We think heaven outstrips all these, and rises far above them all, because it is better than them all.’

On the afternoon of Saturday I had to return to

Kincardine. In bidding her good bye, she said, as she held my hand in hers :

‘God has been very kind to me through the week. I have had much restlessness, but not so much acute pain. You are going away; come soon back; and if — anything occur in the meantime, they will write you.’ I commended her to God, kissed her pale brow, and left her.

Saturday and Sabbath nights were sleepless. As she reclined on her brother William, she said, ‘You have so often supported me during my illness, that I should like to die in your arms. Meanwhile pray for me, that God will not punish me above what I am able to bear; and that he would keep me alive, in the midst of my pain, to my eternal interests.’

‘I wish,’ she said, on the Monday following (July 23), ‘that you would teach me that hymn, beginning:

‘O for a closer walk with God!
A calm and heavenly frame!
A light to shine upon the road
That leads me to the Lamb!’

In the evening she said—‘I am delighted with this sentence from Arrowsmith: “Faith can support when nature shrinks. Faith can call God Father when he frowns, and make some discovery of a sun through the darkest cloud.”’

She continued daily to exercise herself unto all godliness during the whole of this week, and mani-

fested the same unvarying patience under all her trials. On the Friday, a little cloud returned to remind her that she must not yet enjoy the 'climes of the cloudless' in the 'happy land.' She said—'Oh, I wish God soon to finish his purposes with me on earth! I tremble lest all my patience be exhausted; and yet what mercies are in my lot! What kind brothers! I feel for you all. The time shall come when you must be as I am now, but I shall not be there to help you. Make God your friend, and he will provide. He is "Jehovah-jireh."'

Again :

'Ah! I am a sinner! How difficult to attend to godly things!'

'God is a God of mercy,' it was replied, 'and will abundantly pardon.'

'This is my only comfort, except when I remember that God is a God of justice as well as of mercy. What if I am presuming too much on his promises!' The text was repeated :

'Christ bore our sins in his own body on the accursed tree.' She immediately took it up, and repeated it, and a great many others, descriptive of the loving-kindness of God, and of his wonderful compassion and forbearance.

'You seem somewhat sad this evening. Is there anything particular perplexing you?'

'Yes; I am thinking that I committed a great sin last winter, in not taking the Lord's Supper

when I had it in my power. Oh, what an indifference to spiritual things did that manifest!

She was reminded that this was not an unpardonable sin; and that, besides, she was in Edinburgh only as a visitor.

‘All true; but it tested the *state*—I was not *then* a christian. O what a blessing that I have been spared to repent!’

After a pause, she said—‘I am anxious to know if there be anything in the rules of our church to prevent me partaking of the holy Supper before I die, to show my love to Jesus, and my regard for his dying commandment.’ She seemed disappointed when it was stated that this was a church, not a private, ordinance; that its design was to manifest to the world the christian’s glorying in the cross; that there is no authority in scripture for its observance in secret; and that the doing so has led to the profanity of the institution.

On Sabbath the 29th she was much engaged with the Bible, and with the ‘*marrow*’ of Willison, as she described it. Truly she made good use of this author. She was often made joyful by his words, and treasured up in her memory many of his pious ejaculations, that, as she said, she might repeat them during her sleepless nights. She frequently read this one in prayer:

‘O that I may drop my anchor at midnight upon the Rock of Ages, to look out for the dawning of the day!’

Then she added—‘What a security! to cast the anchor of my hope upon Jesus—*this* is indeed *security!*’

She learned the following short prayer, saying concerning it, ‘It is a rich treasure to me, though I remember nothing else:’

“‘Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!’ By the hands of Him who hath redeemed it, let it be presented to thee “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.”’ She said—‘I am greatly pleased with this idea of Christ presenting with his own hand to his Father the saints he has redeemed with his own blood. Even so may I be presented at *that* day!’

At the close of this exercise she remarked—‘I wish I had had strength to commit to memory a few more of these cheering meditations. I have never spent such a happy forenoon. I thank God for it.’

The serious reader of Agnes’ death-bed sayings must by this time have noticed one peculiarity for which they are remarkable—their beautiful simplicity and artlessness. If it were not that it is to *spiritual* things they mainly refer, her style of conversing on these might be characterised as exceedingly *natural*. It was manifest that no effort was ever made merely to please others, or produce an impression in her favour, or to preserve a consistency in the enactment of a part. True piety is seen in her under its various lights and shades, corresponding with what at different times were her views and impressions of divine things. On one day her spirit reposes on God’s love like an infant

on the maternal bosom ; her mind is in perfect peace, all is sunlight, and only the music of hope is heard, gently stealing from the recesses of her happy soul, just as come forth the sweet sounds of an Æolian harp, when in 'stilly night' the playful zephyr sweeps o'er its chords. On the next, there is a tremulousness in the voice, an anxiety in the look, a sternness even in the expression, telling that the harmony within has been disturbed, and that the canopy above has begun to lower and threaten ; then follow the sudden starts of a holy timidity, the swift sweep of the thoughts over the solemnities which she knows must soon be confronted, along with the sickness and faintness of spiritual perplexity and fear. On one day she is seen enjoying the very luxury of the full assurance of faith ; she has ascertained it for herself that heaven is to be her inheritance, and greatly does she long to have her passport signed. From the lofty summit of her rock—Jesus Christ—she sees the promised land in the distance, and longs for the wings of a dove, that she might fly and be at rest. Wrapped within the ample folds of 'the best robe,' the righteousness of her Lord and Saviour, she shudders not even in the cold damps of her dying night. Leaning upon the top of old Jacob's staff—the covenant promises of Jacob's God—she worships and glorifies Jehovah even in the midst of terrible tribulation ; and carrying in her hand the Lamp of divine truth, no cloud obscures the path in which, with gladsome songs, she runs her onward

course. By to-morrow's dawn she appears as if the rock had sunk, and the staff had been broken, and the lamp had gone out: from the miry clay she seems to cry for deliverance, and to go about 'mourning as without the sun.' Then come the more sober and subdued views of an ordinary degree of faith, which neither elevate to the former raptures, nor depress to the latter terrors, but which sufficiently uphold her spirit in the comforts and hopes of the gospel of God. Even these no doubt may now and again be somewhat varied, as a passing cloud on the right hand or on the left for a moment shades the scene; but the regular condition of the inner man most pleasingly corresponds with what scripture assures us is to be the latter end of the perfect and upright—PEACE. So far as we have proceeded, such seems now to be the spiritual character of her piety. We shall not have to discover any more of its *extremes*; the frail bark of her mortality is now nearing the shores of eternity, and the divine Spirit proportions the breeze to the strength of the vessel, and to the short distance that remains to be traversed. Waft, waft her home, O Spirit of the Lord, that thy weary and tempest-tossed child may die, and suffer pain no more! *

* See 'The Hiding Place,' chap. xi.

CHAPTER IX.

The Assurance of Hope.

‘ Unfading Hope ! when life’s last embers burn ;
When soul to soul and dust to dust return !
Heaven to thy charge resigns the awful hour,
O then thy kingdom come, Immortal Power !
What though each spark of earth-born rapture fly ;
The quivering lip, pale cheek, and closing eye ;
Bright to the soul thy seraph hands convey
The morning dream of life’s eternal day.
Then, then the triumph and the trance begin,
And all the Phœnix spirit burns within.’

CAMPBELL.

THEY who sit ‘in the seat of the scornful’ affect contempt for religion on account of what they term its *sameness*—its invariable and uninteresting sameness. It is, according to them, a perpetual harping upon the same key ; and if there be apparent variations, these are not so much occasioned by a change of the music as by the differences of voice and intonation among the members of the orchestra ; or, it is just a kaleidoscope, by the continual turning round and round of which, pretty enough figures are cast up, and these never in all respects alike, but the pebbles are the

same; there is never any new element, never any addition to what is already in existence. For example, among the so-called saints there is continual dwelling upon the subjects of sin and their own unworthiness, of Christ and his salvation, of faith and its necessity, of death and its solemnities, and of heaven and its felicities; so that if we strike out but a few words from their religious vocabulary, we leave them without a language—if we drop ‘the shibboleth’ from their creed, and strip them of party signs, we uncanonise them all, and prove that in religion there is little else than sound, and this sound nothing but a monotone.

It must be admitted that there is a *sameness* in religion; but if this be a reflection upon it, it is one which, with equal propriety, may be cast upon Him who is at once its author and object. God himself is the *unchangeable* God; hence the beauty and sublimity of the addresses of the Psalmist: ‘Of old hast thou laid the foundations of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment: as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed; *but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.*’ God is the Father of lights, who is ‘without variableness or shadow of turning;’ and if he were not so, he could not be the *perfect* and the *holy* One whom we are bound to love and adore. The charge also reflects upon Jesus Christ, who is said to be ‘the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;’

and, indeed, it takes within its blasphemous comprehension the whole subject of religion, from God upon the throne down to the insect which takes its life from his fiat. Because, therefore, our religion is divine, it is ever the same in its elements and principles, in its varieties of joy and song, in its pleasures of hope and imagination, in its modes of thought, its style of expression, and its grounds of boasting. But there is no *such* sameness in it as the scorner insinuates. There may be a perpetual expression of devout experiences, from the same truths and prospects, but to these are ever imparted the charms of novelty; and the same cup may be day after day taken without any change of contents, but the spiritual appetites are ever changing, and with new zest each draught is swallowed, as if the cup had never before been quaffed. The eye of faith is constantly making new discoveries in the Bible, and consequently new streams of satisfaction are ever flowing towards the heart. God himself is ever conferring new manifestations of his glory and his love to the contrite spirit, and hence that spirit's uninterrupted recourse to him and his covenant engagements for its daily happiness. The renewed soul has but made the *discovery* that its present satisfaction in religion is the mere epitome of celestial beatitudes—only the beginning of a feast—the prelibations and foretastes of spiritual dainties, the full enjoyment of which is future. Hence, under the teaching of the Holy Ghost, which is peculiarly the

privilege of the believer, he is never conscious of satiety. He feels a stronger relish for his religion the more he practises its principles, the more he meditates on its statutes, and the more he ruminates its blissful promises. It is new to him every morning, and it is new again every evening. He revels, indeed, in variety. This is the very law of his new and spiritual condition. He obeys it, and he cannot resist it. Moved forward by an uninterrupted flow of divine truths from behind, and by an all-powerful fascination from such truths yet to be imbibed, he never wearies, never flags, and never feels that, either to the extent of their influence or of his own desires, he has apprehended them or by them been apprehended. There is but '*one thing*' that is needful; but then how vast are its dimensions! Its heights he is ever scaling, but never reaching; its depths he is ever fathoming, but he never touches the bottom; its breadths he is ever measuring, but he never completes them; and its lengths he is ever computing, but he has never been, and never can be able to go as far back nor to reach as far forward *as the eternity* which is coeval with its past, and which is to be the witness of its future existence. True, *God* is ever the same; but then he is '*infinite*:' hence there cannot be any sameness in his people's study of his incommunicable perfections. God is ever the same; but then he is '*from everlasting to everlasting*:' hence there never can be sameness at any future period, however remote, of his people's exercises upon him. God is

incomprehensible : hence, through all eternity, religion shall afford an unending and ever-expanding flow of delicious novelties, alike as to the *abstract* matter of study, and the *internal* experiences of the celestial students.

The sneer at saintship to which these observations have reference is thus groundless, as every other sneer at such a subject must be. It is also most inconsistent, as made by the men of the world, who have chosen for their portion the pleasures and profits of sin, than which it is impossible for us to conceive of anything more absolutely same and sickening. Sameness forsooth ! are not irreligious persons the victims of that very curse ? They are ever seeking satisfaction, but never finding it, in the service of the world, the devil, and the flesh. That service is ever the same dull, unvaried, and unvarying round of contemptible pursuits and pantings, where no such thing as satisfaction to the immortal soul can be obtained—so monotonous, so nauseating are they, that he who compassed them all, flung back upon the world, where they have place and influence, this scornful but truthful estimate of their real value : ‘VANITY OF VANITIES, SAITH THE PREACHER ; VANITY OF VANITIES ; ALL IS VANITY.’ While, then, the votaries of this earth’s fashions and follies pronounce them all in the end to be vanity, and therefore condemn them, it ought not to be forgotten that no religious individual has ever borne such testimony against religion. Complaints there

have been that the soul had not yet found her rest, and that clouds may occasionally hover around and obscure her prospects, but these complaints do not affect religion itself; they are made against the personal weakness of him who fails to realise to the full the pleasures of piety. The weeping and lamentation, on the other hand, that are heard coming from the desolated hearths and cheerless spirits of worldlings, are pathetic witnesses to the poverty of the outward portion, and to the inward mortification of those who have tried and tested it in every form, and at length have cast it away, as ever the same cheating, lying, tantalising, and soul-destroying phantom.

Such views as these should be well considered, when we peruse an account of the death-bed exercises of a saint. As from day to day we watch the progress of disease, and witness the same faith and the same patience of the sufferer, we are very apt, especially if, as in Agnes' case, the period of affliction be prolonged, to grow weary over the constant repetition of the same religious truths, and the unvarying (as to us it may appear) phases of the mystery of faith which is there displayed. Christian attendants have, in consequence, been often betrayed into listlessness towards the latter end of such a death-bed as was hers. For the same reason, christian biography has sometimes failed to sustain its interest in the reader's mind. Having ascertained the religious condition, and analysed a few of the religious experiences of the subject

of the memorial, the attention is apt to flag, and the appetite is in danger of being nauseated. This should be guarded against, for reasons sufficiently obvious to the pious reader. It should be remembered that the entire work of the dying scene is the work of the Holy Spirit, and that as *He* continues to advance his suffering child in holy knowledge, and to open up to him, day by day, other and higher views of boundless truth, and other and richer supplies of inexhaustible grace, it may therefore confidently be expected that, to the patient and humble student of the whole, scenes shall be gradually vouchsafed of new and interesting discoveries of the results of the divine life. Had such attention been maintained at many death-beds of which we have got no account, the precious stores of religious biography must have been enriched by many additional illustrations of the power and practice of christianity, whether among the humble poor or the godly rich.

Let the devout reader come forward to the perusal of the closing portions of this work under such impressions, and it may be, he shall not only be unconscious of *sameness*, but the very reverse. He may find out, to his delight, that, whereas he may meet with nothing absolutely new or startling, he receives a new relish for old and familiar truths and scenes, and derives additional improvement and pleasure from their study. Death-bed work ought to be intensely interesting to every one. We are all rapidly ap-

proaching it; and if we are to die safely and comfortably, such are the very truths, such the very expressions, and such the very sources of strength and hope, and no others, to which we ourselves must have recourse. One thing is certain: however we may feel now, in the hey-day of health and confidence, when that solemn hour strikes which consigns us to preparation for God and eternity, we shall be persuaded to flee to these, and these alone, as at once our stronghold in the day of evil, and our earnest business in the day of death.

AUGUST 1, WEDNESDAY.—After an unavoidable absence of ten days, I was permitted to return this morning to the chamber—no longer of conflict and cloud, but of ‘joy and peace in believing.’ It could not have surprised me though she had died on any day during the interval, so much had she suffered, and so greatly exhausted was her strength, if ‘strength’ that feeble, flickering flow of life can be called which remained. Changed as she had been before, I was prepared to witness a greater one, and such was the case. O the tale of agony endured by night and by day without a murmur which that wan and weary expression told! The clearness of the eye was gone, the places where beauty lingered were deserted, and even the signs of mental application were few and separated. There was nothing to gladden in the pitiful smile which arose upon her desolated features, as I sat down in the usual chair. Long had

she been afflicted, and there still was she enduring affliction. Often had she sighed and cried for deliverance, but there was she still in much tribulation. On different occasions had she rejoiced in the thought that the scene was about to close, and that she was now to die; but her faith and patience were to be subjected to additional trials. If ever there was a waiter upon the Lord, she was one; and certainly she waited on him 'more than they that watch for the morning; I say, more than they that watch for the morning.'*

'I have wearied for you,' she said; 'you have been long of coming. Do you know any difference on me? Is not my eye dimmer? I saw myself yesterday in the mirror. For a long time nurse would not let me have it, lest I should be overcome with the change upon my face, but how could she think so?'

'I hope God has not changed in the dispensation of his loving-kindness to your soul.'

'No, no; God is good, and his mercy endureth for ever.'

She then told me of her increasing satisfaction in the scriptures, and her delight also in the works of Willison. She said—

'I consider him one of the best of comforters. He writes as if he knew my most secret wants.'

'That,' I replied, 'is easily accounted for. God's children have the same wants, and they must speak

* See 'The Hiding Place,' p. 232.

the same language in giving expression to them. They have the same Father to address, the same grace to thank him for, and the same Spirit to lead them into all truth.'

'Yes, but they have not all the same amount of sufferings. How prolonged, who lingering are mine!'

'True, but you have not been afflicted above what you have been enabled to bear; and you have the same grace made sufficient for you that carried the martyrs through their fiery trials. You are apt to think your afflictions heavy, but remember what is said: "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory."'

'And yet I hope,' she said, 'that there is no sin in my desire to have this work finished: it is lingering, lingering.'

'No, I do not think there is sin in such a desire, if it be kept free from impatience or discontent. Paul desired it—the Saviour himself prayed for the passing away of the cup. It were unnatural to desire pain, and it cannot be sinful to wish to be free from it, if you are conscious of sincerity in adding, "not my will, but thine be done." We are never *ready* till we die; till we die, then, we should for that reason be content to live; to live even in such a furnace as yours.'

'Well,' she rejoined, 'I do not think that my desires to depart can arise *altogether* from the wish to escape this trial of my faith. It must be also from love to

Jesus; not from the mere blank idea of deliverance from pain; for how could I, a poor creature like me, view death, the grave, eternity, if love for Christ and love to Christ did not sustain me?’

Such was the result of much examination on her part into the state of her mind, of which she was every day becoming more and more conscious—a desire to depart. She had for a while been much distressed as to the propriety of allowing such desires to get an ascendancy, and had in consequence subjected them to strict and godly scrutiny. Her tender yearnings after the path of duty were now reconsidered. She saw how she could check the longing, and at the same time eschew the sin that hovers in its neighbourhood. All her affections were thus elevated; she seemed now to have risen still higher with Christ, and, as on eagle’s wings, she was daily soaring upwards to contemplate, in the intensity of this passion, the reality of that joy which his actual presence would call forth.*

We joined in prayer. While thus engaged, I noticed that she was unusually much affected, and frequently shook her drooping head. So soon as I said *amen*, she broke forth into weeping, and said:

‘O how glad I am that you have come at length! I have missed these prayers; yes, very much. I can only snatch a word or two at a time myself. How glad I am that you have returned!’

* See ‘The Hiding Place,’ p. 211.

She observed me weeping, and checked me, saying, 'You need not weep; vex not yourself about me. You could not desire a better change for me than death. What a blessed change! God will raise you up other friends. Do not grieve for me.'

'We do not grieve for you,' I replied, 'so much as for ourselves. We wish we were like you, and such as you now are. You are going to be crowned; we must remain to fight and suffer here. Your battle is nearly fought; ours is all to fight.'

'When you are laid down as I am,' she said, 'God will deliver you from the fear of death. Who could view it with more terror than I once did? but *now*'—and she looked upwards—'O I wish I were yonder!'

I told her that I should be under the necessity of leaving her again at the end of the week, as I was engaged to assist at Airth in the dispensation of the Supper. She was somewhat discomfited with this, and said—'Come back soon, very soon, as I wish *you* to be here when I die.' She asked me to pray with her again. 'I wish,' she said, 'to be kept easy during the day to enjoy your conversation. When I think of other dying christians, I fear that I have a dead heart—very dead; otherwise I should feel my situation to be more awful than I do, and I would have it more frequently before me.'

Fearing that there might be some cloud hovering about, I read and explained appropriate scriptures, and she maintained her peace.

‘Tell me what you have been preaching about since you were here.’

‘I have been two Sabbaths away from you. On the first of these my text was, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock. If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in unto him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” And the other was, “The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”’

‘Beautiful texts these! And what did you say about the first?’

In reply to her question, I spoke to her of the condescension and long-suffering of Christ, as manifested in his having stood so long at the door of her own heart knocking for admission.

‘And how and with what does he knock?’ she inquired. I replied:

‘With his word, ordinances, providences, and Holy Spirit. The knock of affliction seems to have been the most effectual with you. That one you did hear, and you have opened the door, and he has come in.’

‘Yes, John, I think I have let him in. Welcome to the Son of David! “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord to save me!”’

‘Jesus was resolved not to lose you,’ I added. ‘You kept him a long time standing on the outside under the storm and tempest; but he never went away, though he heard you entertaining his and your own enemies. He continued to stand and to knock.’

‘O it is wonderful! wonderful!’ she exclaimed.
“Bless the Lord, O my soul!”

I then mentioned to her the principal truths by which the other text had been illustrated, and concluded by encouraging her to continue to hold fast her confidence even to the end. I told her that her progress to glory was as sure as the rising of the sun, that her day of grace should very soon be merged into her perfect day of happiness, holiness, and knowledge. ‘For these reasons,’ I said, ‘preserve your resignation to the will of God.’

‘Yes,’ she said, interrupting me :

“’Tis sweet to lie passive in his hands,
And know no will but his.”

Another portion of the Bible was then read, and afterwards ‘*Willison*.’ In his choice sayings of dying saints there is one of Mr John Dodd, who had been dangerously ill, but had received a hope of life from his physician:—‘You think,’ said he, ‘to comfort me with this, but you make my heart sad. It is as if you should tell one who had been sore weather beaten at sea, and conceiving that he was now arrived at the haven where his soul longed to be, that he must go back again to be tossed with new winds and waves.’

‘Now that,’ said Agnes, ‘is just my feeling. I really fear to think of life; though, if God were to spare me, I trust it would be spent in knowing and avoiding its vanities, and to the praise of his glory.’

I prayed twice during the evening, at her desire. Next morning she sent for me rather early to pray for her. She was raised up and supported as usual by pillows at her back and on either side. She was so weak that we could not hear her voice when she tried to speak. I directed her attention to the soothing consolations of her faith, and she indicated her appreciation of them by occasional inclinations of her head. Her delight in and desire for prayer were at all times very remarkable, and were getting every day more so. She often regretted that her sufferings prevented her from praying as she ought, and hence she employed any one for that purpose with whom she could use the liberty. She had another attack of this weakness in the evening, when she was again raised up in bed, and had to be supported by another brother and myself, that, as much as possible, the bed-clothes might not touch her. Truly she was not now a heavy burden; but it was a sad spectacle to us. She had not power to uphold her head, which had fallen forward on her bosom, and she was scarcely able to utter one word. After a pause, she whispered:

‘Oh to depart now! What a blessed change from such sufferings!’

‘Soon now, my dear sister,’ I said, ‘will the Lord deliver you from all distress. Job had many wearisome days and nights appointed to him, but in the end he was greatly rewarded.’

In a little she said—‘Pray again for me.’ I did so.

‘How pleasant — how very pleasant!’ she faintly answered. I continued to speak of the wonderful love of Jesus to her soul, in having pitied her, obeyed for her, died for her, risen for her, and in now making intercession for her.

‘Would you care to pray again?’ she sweetly said. I did so, and then remarked that she seemed to take special delight in this exercise.

‘Yes, I do; but I am too weak now to exert my own mind.’

‘I trust, however, that you have communion with God, and that, like the Psalmist, your meditations on him are sweet.’

‘They are, when relief from pain permits me to meditate.’

‘In what view do you most love to contemplate him?’

‘I love to view him as a God reconciling me to himself through Jesus Christ,’ she replied.

As I was retiring for the night, she requested me to pray again; and, for the fourth time within the last hour, I did so.

AUGUST 3, FRIDAY.—If possible, she was weaker this morning than ever. She tried to speak to me, but could not. From the motion of her lips I guessed her wish; it was to ‘pray.’ This was ever her first business in the morning, and her last at night—to take me with her to the throne of grace. After reading the scriptures and conversing on their soul-

nourishing truths, I told her I must say farewell till the beginning of next week. She said in a whisper—

‘O I am so vexed you are going to leave me! None can pray with me—none can talk with me as you do.’

‘But I do not leave you comfortless. The Holy Ghost is your comforter, indeed your only comforter; for what would it avail you though Paul planted and Apollos watered, if *he* were not to give the increase?’ She replied—

‘It is all true; but you will hasten back when duty is done.’

I promised to do so, though in the fear that by that time she should have gone the way of all the earth.

AUGUST 7, TUESDAY.—I returned to Edinburgh this evening. Nothing particular had occurred in my absence. I found her much in the same condition as when I had left her. She appeared to be lying rather easy. Her face, though pale, wore a sweet and calm expression. Her arms were folded across her breast, and her hands clasped, as if she had been in prayer. We soon got into our usual topics of conversation.

‘You will remember,’ I began, ‘that when I returned from Kinross sacrament, you asked me to tell you what I had heard in the services of that sacrament which might be suitable to you. I was sorry that I could not then satisfy you as I wished, but I can do so now, if you can hear me. Last Sab-

bath I recollected you, and your request, when I was at the Lord's table, listening to the heavenly addresses of Dr Belfrage. You know that his published addresses to communicants have obtained for him just celebrity in all the churches, and I treasured up two or three of his choice remarks for you.'

'I will indeed be delighted to hear them,' she replied.

'You will relish them the more,' I said, 'that Dr Belfrage himself loves you much, and has often expressed himself to me as deeply interested in your comfort. You have a place in his prayers. I have heard him pleading with God for you, that you may be carried triumphantly, as were your dear father and mother, to the close of your warfare.'

'It is a blessed privilege! I am thankful for it. But what did he say to you at the Lord's table?'

I then repeated to her the following passages of rich gospel experience, and was fully recompensed by the manifold and manifest joy which they gave to her soul:—

'How beautiful is the union of these things: our emptiness, and Christ's fulness—our weakness, and his strength—our sorrows, and his sympathy—our death, and his life!

'Believing communicants! why do you refuse the cup of affliction? It is a cup which a Father's hand has mingled: there is not one drop more in it than you need; above all, there is not one drop of curse

in it—not one drop of vindictive wrath. Christ has drunk up all that for you—he was made a curse for you.

‘Suffering believers! you are Christ’s jewels, but you require polishing. The Pearl of great price himself requires no polishing; he has been “made perfect through suffering” already; but you must be made far more resplendent still, before you can grace and glitter in his crown; and affliction is the appointed furnace.

‘Communicants! nature beholds the love of God only in the calm and in the sunshine, but Faith beholds it even in the storm and tempest; even in the darkest hours of afflictive adversity. She rejoices in tribulation, and glories in her Lord’s cross.

‘Believers! you are now under *grace*; you will soon be in *glory*. And what is the difference between grace and glory? Simply this, grace is the bud, glory the blossom: grace is the dawn, glory the meridian: grace is the stream, and glory the full ocean of life that flows fast by the throne of the Eternal.

‘Communicants! you have read these simple but affecting words of the apostle concerning the righteous men of former generations—“*These all died in faith.*” Is not this a sublime epitaph? The heroes of this world have their tablets of marble and pillars of granite raised to perpetuate their memories; but how many thousands of these have already disappeared

under the wasting influences of time! and soon, too, all the others must obey the same law, and crumble into dust; for the memory of the wicked must rot. Here, however, is a monument that has resisted the adverse powers of nearly two thousand years, and it will remain uninjured to the last day. If you wish, then, to reach the true immortalisation of your names, you must live in faith, and you must die in faith.'

Having conversed for some time on the topics suggested by these pleasing thoughts, she seemed greatly satisfied even with her condition, and expressed herself as well pleased to bear the rod so long as God chose to appoint it.

'Let us pray now,' she said. I did so. We then again and again went over the glad tidings of the gospel about the birth of Mary's Son, his obedience, his passion, his death—themes of which she never grew weary; nay, every day she seemed to derive more and more delight from reflecting upon them. The song of salvation was always new to her. She never new what *sameness*, as the scorner calls it, was, in connection with Christ and him crucified—Christ and him risen—Christ and him exalted—Christ and him glorified—Christ and her meeting with him—Christ and his second coming. At this time I asked her:

'Are you willing to live, if it be for the glory of God?'

‘Yes, I am—even to live thus,’ she answered.

‘Are you willing to die, if it be for the glory of God?’

‘I am; but I would rather die than live, if it be his will.’ I continued :

‘I have never remarked it before, Agnes; but the amazing composure you now maintain, even in the view of death, solemnly impresses us all. What a difference between you now and what you were six months ago! Then a lively, healthy, gay, and happy girl, pleased, you often say, with the world, and engaged with its vanities—negligent of soul concerns, and mindful only of the trifles of time!—*now*, your heart is taken from this evanescent scene. You have looked at the world, and now you do not love it; you have looked at the cross, and now you are not ashamed of it; you have looked at death, and now you are not afraid of it; you have looked at heaven, and now you prefer it above your chiefest joy.’

‘“By the grace of God,”’ she said, ““I am what I am.””

‘But when I think of the joys and pleasures that are at God’s right hand, and contrast them with the trials and vicissitudes of earth, I cease to wonder at your prayer, that your feet were standing within the gates of the new Jerusalem—’

She immediately raised her folded hands, and lifted up her eyes, which threw over her still sweet face the impression of the pure thought that filled her soul, as she said :

‘O John! I hope—I hope I am near to it—that, at the very moment of my death, I will enter it!’

‘You certainly must,’ I replied, ‘for it is written, that to be “absent from the body” is to be “present with the Lord.”’

The idea here suggested of the believing soul finding itself, at death, *immediately in heaven*, is alike mysterious with all that is at present known concerning that ‘land of uprightness.’ It is, however, evidently the sense in which we must understand such scriptures as refer to the subject. Such a sudden transition may be unintelligible to us, with our present imperfect information; but it is unreasonable to suppose it to be physically impossible. With respect to this, as to every other science, we are but in our infancy. An esteemed christian friend, when conversing recently upon this subject, gave utterance to a very simple idea, though one which readily occurs only to the genius of sanctified poetry. ‘I have,’ said he, ‘a more tangible grasp of *the immediate transition* since the discovery of the ELECTRIC TELEGRAPH. I think I have now some conception of “absence from the body” being almost simultaneous with “presence with the Lord;” and also how it was that the thief upon the cross was to be “*to-day*” with the Saviour in Paradise; for though heaven be far away, as we think, above yon starry plain, still we now know that, if we could but fix these mysterious wires even as high as those stars whose light has been travelling with incon-

ceivable velocity towards our earth, ever since the creation, without having yet reached it, the communication would, notwithstanding, be instantaneous. In like manner, and with even greater speed, may not the disembodied spirit of the christian wing its flight through space to its eternal home?' The philosopher tells us of two infinitudes, that of *space* and that of the human *soul*, and amuses himself with the efforts of the latter to sound the depths of the former. But such efforts must ever fail. To the believer, however, there is opened up the sublime and sure prospect of ere long being transformed into such a spirit of light, and power, and purity, as shall admit of his boundless excursions among the interminable and innumerable worlds of the Redeemer's universe.

There was here silence for some minutes, when, observing her thoughtful, I asked her to tell me what was occupying her mind.

'John Oliphant is dead,' she replied. 'He was only ill for a week—a week was enough for him.'*

'God has given you months,' I said; 'but every day was needed. Though you have had much pain, you have had many rapturous moments of communion with God.'

'O yes,' she replied, 'I must say so. I have had pleasures which I never knew before, which the world cannot give to, and cannot take from me.' †

* Son of the late respected publisher in Edinburgh, William Oliphant, Esq.

† See 'The Hiding Place,' chap. xii.

AUGUST 8, WEDNESDAY.—To all human appearance, Agnes' last hour had arrived this morning. Her weakness was excessive. For the first time, she took no notice of me when I entered the room, and she made no reply to my usual question. She looked, but it was not a look of recognition. The usual prayer was offered up in silence. She continued in this state till two o'clock in the afternoon, when she sent for me to sit beside her. She had partially recovered; and as I saw she wished to say something, I bent my ear to her lips:

'The saints,' she said, 'speak of *Him* as long of coming; there are times when I think him almost at hand.'

'He will be here soon now,' I replied. 'Possess your soul in patience a little longer, and all shall be over, and you will be at rest.'

I sat beside her for several hours in the evening, but we spake not together. She could not endure even to hear our voices, and she waited silently but calmly for what she thought was now to be her dismissal.

AUGUST 9, THURSDAY.—When her eldest brother was taking leave of her this evening, she said to him, 'I hope I shall not see you again on the earth!' To my delight, she asked me to pray with her; but, to my regret, I saw she was again waxing anxious. When I had finished the prayer, she introduced the subject of death, saying—'O this is serious work! I am dying! Death is near now—very near! I wish

to go to God when it comes; but it is an awful thing to die and be judged!

‘It is,’ I replied; ‘but “thanks be unto God who giveth you the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”’

‘True, true,’ she added; ‘but after all, am I deceiving myself? Is it not a possible thing for a person to fancy himself safe, and, after all, to be in danger?’

‘It is possible,’ I replied, ‘for the wicked and the careless to blind their own minds; but there are evidences with which the people of God ought to assure themselves that they are not self-deceived.’

‘What are these? Tell me—O tell me!’

‘These,’ I answered, ‘are dislike to sin—contrition and sorrow on account of it—love to Jesus—trust in his sacrifice for pardon, and in his blood for cleansing—looking at death through him as unstung, and at heaven as by him prepared and secured for your reception.’

‘And have I these evidences?’

‘Yes, you have; you know that the Spirit of God hath wrought within you these self-same feelings and convictions, and your duty is now to believe that you are his daughter, and that you shall soon “be brought unto the King in raiment of needlework: with gladness and rejoicing you shall be brought: you shall enter into the King’s palace.”’

‘Yes,’ she said, ‘all that is very pleasing; but O I feel that even yet a great change must be produced

upon me before I am fit to enter such a place, and appear in such a presence!

‘The apostle tells us,’ I rejoined, ‘that we “shall all be changed.” That change is begun and far advanced, in you, and at death it will be consummated. You remember perfection is only begun here, hereafter it is attained. Rest assured that the Lord will “perfect that which concerneth you;” and that “he who hath begun the good work will perfect it unto the day of Christ.” He has given you “eternal life, and none shall pluck you out of his hands.”’

‘That is satisfactory, very comfortable,’ she said, and the smile passed over her countenance, telling that the cloud had disappeared. The Lamp had chased away its momentary gloom.

‘The grace of God,’ I continued, ‘is not all that the precious blood of Christ has purchased; he has also bought for us glory, and we shall reach glory through grace. We should never doubt the issues of the work of redeeming love any more than its beginnings. The beginnings of it in our depraved natures are more wonderful than the consequences; and when we find that God has given the first-fruits, we should not doubt his following it up by admitting us to the full fruition, either from the idea that in our present condition we are unfit for it, or that it is beyond our deserts. “He is faithful who hath promised,” and he will certainly perform it.’

‘I am glad, my dear John,’ she said, ‘that you have given battle to my returning weakness; but yet I cannot help thinking that other dying christians are not so impatient as I am.’

‘We daily thank God,’ I said, ‘because he has so wonderfully supported you during your long and sore distress. But for his goodness and mercy, you could not have borne it as you have done.’

‘I have, however, been a very impatient sufferer,’ she rejoined.

‘We think not,’ I added; ‘you have been quite the contrary. But you are surely forgetting that your Saviour is not a high priest who cannot be touched with a fellow feeling of your infirmities, and that he was in all things tempted like as you are, yet without sin. He is not a hard taskmaster.’

Agnes persevered in this strain for some time longer, and again her difficulties and dreads had to be encountered. For a moment *His* face seemed to be hid from her; but, as usual, with everlasting kindness he had mercy upon her. The tempter was making a last effort to bring her down from the rock of her confidence, but she was ‘made more than a conqueror through him that loved her.’ Before I left her, the soul had again returned ‘into its quiet rest.’* To this composure she was brought back by the reading of the eighth chapter of the Romans. I had never before seen her listen with such absorbing attention to scrip-

* See ‘The Hiding Place,’ pp. 285-289.

ture. She followed me verse by verse, word by word, frequently repeating after me any clause with which she was more particularly impressed, and desiring me to pause or repeat it. When I got the length of the last two verses, she bade me stop, and then, with a beautiful voice and most melting emphasis, she recited that glorious peroration of the inspired apostle: 'For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

'I was endeavouring,' she continued, 'last night to repeat these verses, but forgot part.'

'Is it not,' I asked, 'a most invaluable and consolatory portion of scripture?'

'It is indeed,' she replied; 'and never did I feel its power and know its worth as I at this moment do.'

It was a word *in season*. I added, 'It would be wise for us to read the Bible more frequently than we do. It has been your guide, your lamp, your light, your all, on this death-bed.'

'Yes,' she said. 'But perhaps it were wise to read it more seldom, if it be read in the manner in which I was once accustomed. I remember that I would often read three or four chapters at a time, morning and evening, and in a few minutes after, all was

forgotten. Now, if I had read only a few verses, or half a chapter, I might have remembered it better, and profited more by it.'

At her request I now again read the *twenty-third* Psalm.

'O how we should prize,' she said, 'the love of that kind and faithful Shepherd! It is to his love we owe all these great blessings.'

'Would God,' I replied, 'we could give him more of our hearts even here! What a pity we do not give them up entirely to him!'

'He shall have them entirely hereafter,' she said, interrupting me. 'Yes, all—all the heart. Will you read that psalm over again? for though I know it well, I am never weary of hearing it.'

I read the psalm, occasionally remarking upon it as I did on that day when first I spoke to her under the impression that she was in danger. I observed on the fifth verse: 'God has spread the table of his grace before you even while lying upon this bed, and in presence of all your spiritual foes; yea, here he hath "caused your cup to run over, and hath anointed you with the oil of gladness."'

The change of expression on her face at this was startling. The former fire of her dark eye seemed to have returned. Its expression was that of triumph—yea, of ecstasy—as she exclaimed:

'O, I think I see my Saviour now! He is laugh-

ing at my foes, while he is carrying me a willing captive in his arms towards heaven!

Here she suddenly ceased. The look of joy was gone, and in a low tone she added, '*If it be so that I am converted.*'

'Agnes! I replied, startled at this, 'can it be that you will doubt his love any more, or that you are among his chosen friends?'

'No, no!' she answered quickly, her face again brightening up as before. 'I think I see my Saviour laughing at their chagrin. But, perhaps, I should not speak of him as laughing; it is not a proper expression. There is no laughing in heaven. I should have said, smiling with complacency upon me, and in triumph over them!'

'Your language,' I replied, 'is not improper; for we read in the scripture that he will "*laugh* at the calamities of the wicked, and mock when their fear cometh."⁹

The evening of this day was sweetly serene. With inimitable tenderness, she desired us to take from her own hands any little token of love we might desire. To one she gave her pen-knife, to another her silver fruit-knife, and to another her favourite seal. 'Keep these for my sake,' she said; but in the midst of her affectionate disposal of these, a paroxysm returned, and instantly she was reduced to a speechless, motionless condition. When the proper attention was paid by the nurse, I saw her lips move, and I listened. She said feebly:

‘This is dreadful suffering! but if the jewel require a brighter polish, I say, “God’s will be done.” Still, you may pray for Christ to come to me. Surely there is no sin in that!’

After uttering a short prayer, and a few words of consolation, I left her, and the last words I heard her repeat as I retired were these—

‘THIS AND HEAVEN!’

It would be unjust to Agnes if, from her desires of relief, it were supposed that she had waxed impatient, or that she looked upon the dispensation of God with dissatisfaction. She at the first did sometimes express her wonder that she should have been the one selected for such an early death, but by this time all that sort of feeling was gone. She was perfectly pleased with what God had done to her, and ‘*glorified*’ him in consequence. She reminded us of the seraphic Payson, in one of his beautiful dying sayings: ‘It seemed this afternoon as if Christ said to me, “You have often wondered and been impatient at the way by which I have led you, *but what do you think of it now?*” And I was cut to the heart when I looked back and saw the wisdom and goodness by which I had been guided, that I could ever for a moment distrust his love.’

AUGUST 10, FRIDAY.—This morning I went to see and pray with her. She had had a weary night, and was unfit for the least exertion. It was painfully evident that death could not be far away. She could no longer take part in spiritual exercises; prayers and

hymns were laid aside, 'sweet Willison' had done his last service, and nothing but the Word—the quick and powerful Word of God—could be at intervals whispered into her ear. Even the name of her beloved Saviour was seldom heard from her lips. This diminution of religious intercourse was a new trial. It was not easy all at once to surrender those heavenly pleasures which had for so long a period been enjoyed in her dying chamber. It had indeed been a time of care and sorrow, but one also of joy and hope, arising from the grand and stately spectacle of a soul like hers gradually rising from spiritual death, and carried triumphantly over all the suggestions of the sceptic, and all the weakness of nature. But it was even so—these must now almost entirely cease; her prayers and her communings must now be with God alone. The work was becoming too holy for others to be associated with its progress. The Spirit was carrying it on by his own enlightening and confirming influences; and though with a rending heart, the task that had been assigned to us was now laid aside. From this period she spoke but little, but it was evident that she was as busy as she could be in girding up 'the loins of her mind.' Occasionally during this day she was overheard saying, '*I thank God—I thank God.*' Once she was asked if we might repeat a favourite hymn to her, but she refused. When any of us approached her bed, she would say, '*Hush,*' and raise her feeble hand to motion us away. It was most evident from her

whole demeanour that she was every moment expecting death, and that she wished to be in full readiness to welcome Jesus. In the afternoon she overheard her youngest brother, who had that day obtained a prize in the High School, complaining that a boy in a lower class than his had received a prize of equal value. She called him to her, and said very gently, 'Remember, my dear Andrew, the parable of the labourers in the vineyard; they who came at the eleventh hour received their penny, as well as those who had come in the morning. If you have received what is your due, you should be content.' There was again a long interval of perfect quietness, after which she signified a wish for me to lean down and hear a request. I did so, and with some difficulty she made out the following:—

'I wish to advert to a worldly matter, and after that I think I shall have done with the world. William cannot listen to me about these things, but you are more firm, and you can hear me. You know how kind and attentive my nurse has been. I wish her to get the new shawl which I purchased to wear this last winter; say to her that this was my dying request. You will also find in my dressing-box a piece of money, give it from me to the servant who has had so much trouble with me.'

I assured her all her wishes would be attended to, and after a brief prayer, which she requested, we sat alone in silence. About an hour afterwards I saw her

making an effort to speak. I listened, but could not make out what she wished me to do. The words 'comfort' and 'death' I thought were uttered, and not wishing to give her the pain of repetition, I answered as if I had understood her to refer to our comfort in her death. But she intimated that I had misunderstood her, and with some difficulty I heard her say—

'In many accounts of dying christians which I have read, I think they had the comfort of being told, an hour or so before death, that it was just at hand. Now, am I to have that comfort? Tell me if death be near.'

'It cannot be far away,' I said; 'but the hour no man can tell.'

'I know,' she replied. 'God only knows the very hour; but sometimes friends have an idea of when it may be. For instance, in that "Mother's Journal," which I have been reading, she told her daughter that she should die that night. Now am I to die this night?' I answered:

'All I can say is, that from your exhausted state, it cannot be very long now.'

'Well,' she said, 'that is more explicit. I did not know that before.'

'Surely,' I said, 'if it be the will of God, you are not averse to live?'

'No!' she answered.

'If you are in Christ Jesus, what may be the exact moment of your death need not trouble you.'

‘I am not troubled about it,’ she said; ‘I only thought to have received the same comfort which other dying christians have had from their friends—the comfort of knowing how soon I shall be in glory.’

‘Wait still on the Lord,’ I added; ‘and remember Dr Belfrage’s words: “This is a cup which a Father’s hand hath mingled.”’

‘Yes,’ she replied; ‘and that was another beautiful idea of his about the polishing of the jewels for the crown of Christ. But, John, there is a very fine passage of scripture which you were wont to use in your prayers, and you have omitted it for some time: “What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”’

‘Yes,’ she added, with considerable firmness, after thinking for a little on this scripture. **‘YES; I THINK I AM NOW CONFIDENT OF MY SALVATION! I AM SURE OF GOING TO HEAVEN, AND I HOPE YOU WILL ALL FOLLOW!’***

Not only with these words themselves, but with the indescribable meekness, and at the same time firmness, with which they were uttered, were our hearts gladdened. Her soul had now reached the summit of Pisgah, from which the promised land of Canaan burst upon her view. From this moment no clouds ever rested upon or gathered near her high place.

* See ‘The Hiding Place,’ p. 289, to the end of chap.

Her exercise seemed now, and up to death, to be a perpetual gazing from this position upon the glorious prospect which had at length been opened up to her faith. Pendant upon the wings of Hope and Love, her tranquil spirit was ever on the alert to fly away; and so intent was she upon her translation, that it was only now and then that she could be induced to look down upon the weeping mortals that stood gazing upwards, in admiration of her exalted state. It was indeed a glorious winding-up of a complicated, a mysterious, and a tempestuous passage through this bleak and waste howling wilderness; and we gave God thanks that we, too, were privileged to behold our sister in the possession of celestial happiness even before she ceased entirely to be of this world. Though sadly weakened in body, and still occasionally agonised with pain, never did her peaceful spirit descend from the splendid peak of this spiritual Nebo to which she had been lifted up. From her silence, and the deep impressive solemnity of her manner, it was evident she was now almost continually occupied in realising the beauties and glories of Paradise, and in seeing and hearing what 'it was not lawful for a man to utter.' Her looks sometimes told of unspeakable work within and beyond her, and we could have fancied her in rapturous communion with some lovely sister spirits hovering over her couch. As we stood looking upon her, we could scarce believe that where there was such suffering there could be such placidity. We thought,

‘Lovely thou art! yet none may dare
 That placid soul to move.
 Most beautiful thy braided hair—
 But awful holiness breathes there,
 Unmeet for earthly love.’

Her whole manner carried us back to the brilliant death-bed of her sainted mother, and *now* we saw the answer to that prayer which went up to God for her only daughter, as she gave the last kiss to Agnes, and laid her in the bosom of everlasting covenant love. True, her dear child had had some chilling, dreary days since the hour of her orphanage, and latterly she had passed through ‘*the fires*,’ but the God of the parents had never ceased to watch over and secure the soul of the child. And there—there it is now, ‘whether in the body or out of the body’ we scarce can tell, so pure, so calm, so wrapped in the peace and joy of believing is this daughter of Zion. The only scripture which we could venture to put into her mouth, as expressive of what were her feelings, is the song of Mary: ‘My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his hand-maiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. . . . He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; as he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.’

AUGUST 11, SATURDAY.—Any conversations with her after this were mere snatches from such moments of ease—and they could only be styled *moments*—as were granted to her, and when we did venture to disengage her from that invisible fellowship with which she was intensely occupied. She suffered a great deal all this day in ‘the earthly house of her tabernacle;’ so much so, that we supposed it next to impossible that the frail tenement could stand out many minutes against such incessant attacks. But the ‘*inner man*’ was at rest—

‘The soul’s dark cottage, battered and decayed,
Let in new light through chinks which suffering made.’

We engaged in prayer, after which I asked if she were perfectly happy. *A look* not to be mistaken was the response. ‘It is His will,’ I continued, ‘that you suffer still, but I hope the serenity within is unruffled.’ A second look said eloquently, ‘*Yes.*’ As it was my painful duty to leave her, and for the last time, this afternoon, I reminded her of it. She took no notice of what I said, though she kept her eye fixed upon me. About an hour afterwards she sent for me, and desired me, as we were alone, to pray once more with her. I did so, pouring out my heart on her behalf before God the Father, committing her over and over again to him, and beseeching him to be near her to the last, and at the last to glorify her with the glory that is his own — committing her to the blessed

Redeemer, that he might continue to smile upon her while in the swellings of Jordan, and to keep himself, as the 'star that came out of Jacob,' revolving above her in this 'hour and power of darkness'—and committing her to the Holy Spirit, that he might continue to send his 'light forth and his truth,' so that her feet might not stumble on any dark mountain. Having finished, I brought myself up to say what I believed must be the final farewell, and the following simple conversation, carried on in whispers, closed the scene :

'I am compelled to leave you now, Agnes, and God only knows whether we shall ever meet again.'

A holy, happy look upwards passed a smile over her death-like face as she replied—'In heaven, John, I hope, if it be the will of God.'

'I am leaving you strong in the faith of our Lord Jesus?'

'Yes.'

'You are relying wholly and alone upon his justifying righteousness?'

'I am.'

'You leave this world without regret?'

'I do.'*

'Even all its gaities, amusements, treasures, hopes?'

'Yes,' she said firmly. 'All—all, even you and my dearest friends.'

There was here a brief pause, till she had her

* See 'The Hiding Place,' p. 272.

parched mouth moistened with a little wine. I then said, 'Farewell, Agnes!' She took my hand in hers, and held it firmly, saying, 'Farewell, my dear brother!' and then she uttered a few words so indistinctly that I could not make them out. I guessed that she was asking me to pray ere we parted, and asked her if I would do so. 'No!' she replied, as if I had interrupted her. 'Pray always—always!' She continued to hold my hand in hers; and from her appearance, I saw that she herself was engaged most fervently in prayer. After a minute or so she let fall my hand, saying, 'Now!' with considerable emphasis; and she closed her eyes. I left the room. Many a time had I prayed for her; but now she would give the grand conclusion to the work—the never-to-be-forgotten work of this hallowed chamber. She herself would pray. Her prayer, however, was not for herself. May Jehovah hear that prayer!

CHAPTER X.

Death and the Grave.

‘ O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? ’—PAUL.

‘ O look upon her face: Eternity
Seems shadowed there! A pure immortal calm,
Whose presence makes the tumults of this world
Pass like a fleeting breeze, and through the soul
Breathes the still ether of a loftier clime.’

JOHN WILSON.

IN bringing these scenes and conversations to a close, the reader is requested to mark what has been their chief characteristic—*extreme simplicity*. The secret lies in this—AGNES WAS IN EARNEST. Earnestness chooses few words, and these words plain and forcible; they speak to the point at once, and leave no suspicion as to their real meaning and design. Having but one object in view, and that object the salvation of her soul, she was never at a loss to express herself, and never tempted any beside her to misunderstand what she said, or to conceive either too much or too little of her peculiar feelings at the time. She was an honest and upright inquirer into the truth, after she was fairly set upon preparation for what was at hand; and every

one who had the privilege of conversing with her on her death-bed, retired from her under the conviction that her singleness of mind was the most beautifully transparent feature in her character. This was indeed one of her main excellences from childhood, and her dying work only gave it more serious employments, and more ample scope for illustration.

It is impossible to overvalue *simplicity* of character, especially in religion. It is this that discovers religion in its true colours—in its proper elements. Artifice and ostentation hide its beauties, and unveil their own gairish and changing hues. There have been far more splendid dying scenes than the one now contemplated, if we include the powerful conversations of the higher order of intellectual gifts, and the more graphic and imposing pictures which genius, inspired by christian faith, has sometimes drawn, when engaged with the dark elements of death, or contemplating the exciting prospects of eternal life. Nor would we undervalue such surprising and fascinating scenes as these; we assign to them at once a more exalted place among the annals of the soul's conflicts with the king of terrors. But there is no doubt that the study of such sublime combats and revelations has a tendency to concentrate attention upon the personal eminence of the sufferer, or upon the moral mightiness of the christian religion to wield such influences over superior and accomplished minds. We cannot peruse such narratives without giving

glory to God for subduing to his Son's cross these intellectual principalities and moral dominions. In the plain and artless discoveries, however, of the death-bed before us, it is likely that its solemn appeals will be echoed from a greater number of human hearts. It is not so much the sufferer herself, nor the mere material and structure of her observations, that command attention, as the truths of religion in all their own importance, and in their necessary connection with the soul's safety now, at death, and for ever. It is religion that speaks, and that is spoken about; and it is the thrilling interest which the faith of its necessity for, and its adaption to, the wants and destinies of the immortal soul, gives to the narrative, that forms its sole claim upon the reader's respect. Every one feels that if this be the 'one thing needful' for a dying day, it is not after all beyond his reach. There is nothing here to confound the most child-like mind, nothing here unapproachable by the most timid disciple; and the spiritual conflict which is reviewed rather excites than chills the earnest ardour of the youngest soldier of the cross. In the study of the higher achievements of some dying gladiators, the humble followers of the Lamb have been apt to doubt whether they after all have been converted; but none of the children of God, we humbly think, can go away from such a death-bed as this without 'thanking God and taking courage.'

Besides, in the study of such conversations as Agnes',

we are using the true test by which to try the genuineness of her conversion to God; by which, in short, to prove the sincerity of profession, and the genuineness of piety. Sometimes the germ, the element of godliness, is so concealed among the exuberance of fruit and foliage that it is apt to be overlooked; and peradventure some may pass for christians who never tasted and found God to be good, whilst others may have conceded to *themselves* the praise and the glory which were due to divine *principles* and divine *grace*. In reviewing, however, the unpretending exercises of this gentle christian, we see less of the person and more of the principle—less of nature and more of grace—less of man and more of God. We behold in the very heart of every development of christian faith and practice, the true and only germinating power—even the Holy Spirit—and we witness the very process at work which his impulsive touches set and keep in motion, for the dissemination of pure vital influence through the various capacities of the believer's sanctifying nature. It is from within the circle of such enterprises as Agnes' that the invitation comes with melting effect: 'Come hear, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what *he* hath done for my soul.'

Independent of all this, how affectingly do the simple exercises of Agnes' death-bed preparation illustrate the tender mercies and the wonderful faithfulness of God himself! We know how many and how precious are the promises which he has made to

encourage us to love and put our trust in him, especially in our days of trouble and at our night of death. Here, then, do we see him in the plenitude of his compassion, in the power of his grace, and in the riches of his covenant engagements, fulfilling his promises to the 'prisoner of hope.' Nothing happened to her that was strange. She said—"I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me." She confessed that God had been good to her beyond her expectations, and that there were no truer words in the Bible than these: 'God is a very present help in trouble;' 'God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early;' 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee;' and 'God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.' Under these impressions of the importance and uses of such narratives as the present, we proceed to draw the veil over the last, the solemn hours and works of this patient, and now fully-assured, believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

AUGUST 12, SABBATH.—This was her last Sabbath on earth. Before another dawned she had entered upon her everlasting rest, and had joined the ransomed of the Lord in ascribing worthiness to the Lamb who was slain. The previous night had been what most of the nights of the preceding six months

had been—one of restlessness and distress; but what many of these nights had not been—one of perfect tranquillity of mind, and joyful anticipation of ‘rest.’ She was now assured that death could not be far distant; and this enabled her to bear up under sufferings which might otherwise have sadly discomposed her. Indeed, such was her manner of endurance, that it was only when she was asked about it, that she admitted her pain to be still great. In the morning of this hallowed day, she reclined in the arms of her brother William, where many a time her wearied head had lain and sunk to rest. She became suddenly very faint and weak, and her sight left her. ‘If this be death,’ she said quickly, ‘then I will die where I have often wished to die—in your arms; and surely I am now dying! O blessed Jesus—blessed Jesus—thou art coming now! Behold he comes—he comes! I thank thee, my Saviour, for coming at last. “My soul has thirsted for thee; my flesh has longed for thee in a dry and thirsty land!” But what do I see? Look there! What bright and shining light is that? It is a light bright as the sun in the firmament. It is Jesus! Come, Lord! O come quickly!’

It is impossible to give anything like a true and full account of this scene. She continued for a long time to express herself in language of rapturous delight and holy triumph—gazing with her eye and pointing with her finger at some glorious object beside her, and calling him by name her own and her adorable

Redeemer. They were so overpowered on this, as they had been on similar occasions before, that they could not recollect either the abundance or the beauty of her language. At last she ceased from pure exhaustion, and reclined her head again on her brother.

‘Has it been all a delusion then?’ she inquired in a few minutes from this, and in a pitiful and disappointed tone of voice. ‘Am I still here? and yet what wondrous light was that which appeared to me! Can my imagination have been deceived by the light of the morning? “Nevertheless, O Lord, thy will be done.”’

She had been impressed that her hour was come, and gave her Lord that rapturous welcome which she had for so long been preparing for him. It was rather soon, but not much too soon; and with regard to what her eyes beheld, it becomes not a stranger to intermeddle.

‘This is the day which the Lord hath made,’ she said again; ‘and it will be one continued Sabbath in heaven. Read to me that hymn of the dying christian, beginning, “The hour of my departure’s come.”’ Her wish was complied with.

Towards evening, she took her last adieu of her eldest brother. Their parting was beautiful and melting; it was a simple but a sublime scene.

‘I am under the painful necessity to leave you, Agnes,’ he said.

‘Farewell, dear James!’ she replied very feebly.

‘Have you nothing important to say to me?’

‘Love to all,’ she replied; ‘my dying love.’

‘No doubt you preserve your faith and confidence strong and immovable?’

‘I hope I do,’ replied the meek child of heaven.

As his latest farewell fell upon her ear, she closed her eyes, and made no audible response. There was weeping in the chamber, but no tear fell from her. He had reached the door, but returned to the foot of the bed, and, softly withdrawing the curtains, he was taking his last look. He thought she was asleep, and whispered, ‘I shall never see her again!’ In a moment her eyes opened, and she slowly and solemnly raised her feeble arm, and pointing with her finger upwards, said, ‘IN HEAVEN, James!’ and then she shut her eyes and saw him no more. Ah! *there* was an appeal which even flinty hearts could not have resisted. No doubt her farewell with him was the same as that which had been given to the writer on the previous day. She was praying for him. God in his mercy grant that that prayer also may receive an abundant answer in his blessed and eternal experience! How affectingly descriptive were these few words, and that heavenly attitude of her own unclouded and perfect hope of bliss and immortality beyond the grave! Her thoughts were now as high as heaven itself. With the eye of the eagle, as well as on eagle’s wings, she had soared upwards, and with piercing look had

discovered her own happy home, to which she invited those near and dear to follow her.

Later in the evening she expressed a wish for one to pray with her. She was asked if she could listen to one of Willison's prayers, which she had often read with great satisfaction. She refused, saying, 'I wish one specially adapted to myself. Go and ask my uncle to come and pray with me.' Her uncle, Mr Husband, who was in the house, came and prayed with her. This was exceedingly pleasant to her. He had been as a father to her ever since she was fatherless, and she loved him with all her heart. His spirit, too, has rejoined that of his lovely niece in Christ's Father's house.

'You are firm, dear Agnes,' he said, 'on the Rock of Ages.'

'O yes,' she replied, '*firm*, I trust, in God. It is written, "None perish that him trust;" also, "God is not a man that he should lie."'

Thus, however enfeebled her bodily strength was, her mind was as strong and clear as ever—still calmly reconnoitring the foundations of her faith—still able to give a reason, a scriptural reason, for the hope that was in her. Though she lay quiet, she was by no means idle—she was constantly busy. She was observed, a little after this, to be engaged in prayer.

'I hope you remember us still in prayer?' said one of her brothers.

'Yes, I do,' she replied. It was rejoined:

‘Perhaps it is God’s purpose, in your early affliction and death, to secure our salvation. Supposing this to be the case, are you willing to be made a sacrifice for us?’

‘Yes,’ she answered, ‘my *life* cheerfully, but not my *soul*.’

Ere parting with them for the night, she said to the nurse and others in the room :

‘I often ask forgiveness of God for my impatience, and I know he will grant it. I wish now to ask yours for all my fretfulness, and for all the trouble you have had with me.’

‘We have nothing to forgive,’ replied William, ‘but rather great reason to thank God for the wonderful fortitude with which you have borne the burden and heat of a long day of suffering.’

AUGUST 13, MONDAY.—I did not expect, on my return to Edinburgh this forenoon, to see her in life ; but in life I found her, and what was most afflictive, still the victim of acute suffering. I saw, however, the unmistakeable signs of approaching dissolution. I scarcely knew her ; her sweet expression was entirely gone ; the smile of welcome—the symbol of a living intelligence—seemed to be gone also—all gone. A lesson of humility might have been learned there. She lay and suffered, but not one murmur escaped her lips. I asked her if I might pray with her. She gave no assent. Some hours afterwards the nurse came at her request, and I prayed. I then proceeded

to what proved the last of a long series of addresses upon the rich and strong consolations of her holy faith. She never once took her eye from me; and never had I seen her give such keen attention, the more especially when I came to speak of the perfect safety of the believer in Jesus—of the beauty and bliss of that land she was so soon to enter—and of the privilege of the saints in having Immanuel himself, the King of the country, to conduct them over Jordan. ‘The moment,’ I continued, ‘your immortal soul is at liberty, you will find that Jesus is at hand—that he will take you up in his arms, and carry you in his bosom homewards.’

Even in her strangely altered countenance, I could discover what was working within. Occasionally the eye sparkled with pure delight; and when I closed with the above words, she could contain no longer, and exclaimed as in triumph—“**YEA, THOUGH I WALK THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH, I WILL FEAR NO EVIL: FOR THOU ART WITH ME; THY ROD AND THY STAFF THEY COMFORT ME!**”

With these words her christian testimony was wound up, and thus closed for ever a brother's contributions to the peace of a dying sister's soul. During the course of the day, she manifested an anxiety that we should not leave the room, as she wished us all to see her die. For the first time her mind seemed to wander, but only a little, and for the most part her exercise seemed to be prayer. Deep sighs and heavy

moanings told of sinking nature ; and we expected that as the sun went down, she, too, would pass away into realms beyond its light. But she survived this sunset, and ere I left her for the evening, I for the last time accompanied her to the throne of grace in prayer. This was indeed the closing supplication, the latest uplifting of our souls together, the last knock which we gave at the gates of the celestial city. Soon after this they were thrown open, and she disappeared from our view.

‘I weary to see *Him*. Oh, when shall I see *Him*? Shall I see him to-night, nurse?’ *

‘In all likelihood, ma’am, you will be in heaven soon now.’

‘But *to-night*, nurse? Shall I see *Him this night*?’ were the last words we heard as we left her chamber.

AUGUST 14, TUESDAY.—Though not within her room, this last night was a wakeful one to us all. Very pitiful and heart-melting were the moanings which occasionally sounded through the silent habitation from the dying maiden. Frequently during its watches did she urge her nurse to bring us to see her die. Early in the morning we stood beside her. How mysterious, we said, is Providence—she still lives! Such was her condition that neither prayers nor words of comfort could be presented, though it was pleasant to see that her soul was still calm and confident.

* See ‘The Hiding Place,’ p. 353, to the end of chap.

During the whole of this forenoon we watched closely by her bedside; she was so weak that we feared she might at any moment leave us. She was evidently under the same impression, and signified her wish that none of us should quit the room. She could not speak, but she looked upon us most sweetly, and said a thousand farewells in every look. Her smile, too, returned to her pale face, the first herald of that joy of which she was so soon to partake. Her whole expression seemed to say—‘I am near HIM and HOME. In a few minutes I shall be in his bosom. Soon this weary bed I will resign, and suffer pain no more—all my doubts and fears are gone—I am ready to be offered. I leave you all without a tear—weep not for me. Be sure and live so that this parting shall be only temporary! I charge you to meet me in heaven. O how glorious the prospect!’ Though she had uttered these sentences, we could not have more clearly apprehended her thoughts. While *thus* conversing with us, we noticed her eyes gently closing; it was about two o’clock, and thinking she was merely falling on sleep, we were pleased and grateful; it was the only thing like sleep that we had seen her enjoy for months. We expected, however, that ere she died we should be favoured with some sublime, some heavenly scene, such as imparted to her mother’s last moments so memorable an interest, and that that prayer for Agnes which passed from the dying mother’s lips, as her spirit was on the wing for glory, should now

in some remarkable way be heard. The course of our sister's dying work contributed to beget such hopes and wishes; for already on several occasions she had evidenced, by her manner and expressions, her nearness to the spiritual world, and her mysterious discernment of its hidden glories. But such was not the will of our heavenly Father. Truly we had seen and heard what was sufficient to satisfy us that there is even before death, between believers and the 'powers of the world to come,' a *reality* of communion and a vividness of perception which comes very close upon, if it does not actually touch, the confines of Paradise. Her *silence* this forenoon we felt to be somewhat painful. On reflection, we now saw that her work was by far too heavenly for utterance. She lay, as we thought, in deep and refreshing sleep, till six o'clock in the evening, when we became alarmed at its continuance. None there, save the nurse, had ever seen death before; and impressed with the fear that she might die without one last look of love, we gently tried to awaken her. It was in vain. The last thing of which she took notice, was the music at family worship in the morning, and the next melody that broke upon her ears rose from the hosannahs of the ransomed in the choirs above. She did not return to consciousness here.

About ten o'clock this night we were all standing at her couch, and it was proposed that we might engage in family devotions, and once more entreat the

Lord together to take her to himself. We retired to the dining-room. Part of the thirty-fourth Psalm was selected for praise, and just while we were singing these lines,

‘The troubles that afflict the just
In number many be :
But yet at length out of them all
The Lord doth set them free,’

the nurse rushed into the room, and called upon us to ‘make haste.’ In an instant we were beside Agnes.

She had often instructed the nurse to be sure and inform her when she thought the last moment had arrived. This the faithful attendant had done. Observing upon her strangely altered face the symbol of dissolution, she took Agnes’ hand, saying—

‘Now, dear, do you hear them singing the praises of God? You are about to depart and sing his praises in heaven.’

As we entered the room she had just been raised up, and was supported as usual by pillows on each side. The dim light of the taper revealed her now haggard features; her eyes slowly opened, she looked all round the room, gave one beautiful smile, and then the eyelids fell, and a still more glorious sight was opened to her view. SHE WAS GONE!

AND SO SHE DIED AT LENGTH! While we were singing as a family on earth, she began her song as one of the family in heaven. The nurse, at my request, brought the Bible, and I laid it down upon the

attenuated body. She had now no need of its light ; God and the Lamb were her light now ; but we needed it, for the darkness of death was around us, and having read a portion of these scriptures, the knowledge and faith of which had wrought such great things for our departed sister, we concluded the death-bed work by casting ourselves upon the care of Him who had bereaved us of one alike lovely and beloved, and that in a way calculated to alarm us into serious thought, and draw us into the path of the just.

AND SO SHE DIED!—and without a struggle—a calm termination to a stormy voyage. I now closed those eyes which had so often beamed upon me with the light of intelligence and love, kissed the pale cheek, and left the chamber of death :—

‘Go, peaceful shade! exchange for sin and care
 The glorious palm which patient sufferers wear :
 Go take the meed victorious meekness gains—
 Go wear the crown triumphant faith obtains.
 Those silent graces which the good conceal,
 The day of dread disclosure shall reveal :
 Then shall thy mild, retiring virtues rise,
 And God, both judge and witness, give the prize.’

AUGUST 15, WEDNESDAY.—We entered the chamber as usual this morning—the chamber now of death—not to inquire how she had passed the night, for we knew she had been in consummate felicity, and in the bloom and health of immortality ; not to ask if her faith remained steadfast on Jesus, for we knew that

faith with her had passed into vision ; not to ask her to go with us to the throne of grace in prayer, for we knew that she was now before the throne of glory in praise ; not to weep for her sufferings, for we knew that all tears were wiped away from her eyes ; but we went into her chamber to weep for ourselves—to pray for ourselves, and to gaze upon her precious dust. While thus mourning for our dead, a kind Providence interfered, and sent one to comfort us whom, above all others, we most desired to see. This was that venerable man of God, Mr Brown of Inverkeithing. He had come to see Agnes, to hear her beautiful dying testimony, and to pray with her before she died. His former visit, it may be recollected, was upon the day on which she was first apprised of her danger, and his last was when all that danger had been bravely encountered and gloriously triumphed over by this youthful christian. Very solemn and suitable were his admonitions to the survivors of the family, especially his urgent entreaties with them to remember their Creator in the days of their youth ; to walk worthy of those ‘who through faith and patience were now inheriting the promises,’ and to ‘fight the good fight of faith,’ that in the end they might receive the crown of life. Having offered up a melting and earnest prayer, the aged saint took his departure evidently under peculiar feelings, to which his thoughts of other years, and his associations with the deceased, would impart a deep and sacred impression.

But preparations must now be made to comply with the dying wish of Agnes about the place of interment. The messenger who had been despatched to Fifeshire on the previous evening to inform relatives of her decease, returned this forenoon with information that all things would be in readiness for receiving the body. Her affectionate uncle came over to Edinburgh, and made all the necessary arrangements. On the evening of Thursday the 16th, we laid her remains in the coffin, and having taken the last fond look of love, it was carried to the sable hearse, which slowly moved from that dwelling to which she had gone in the beginning of winter with high hopes of earthly enjoyment, but where had been administered to her work of a more awful and important character. The hearse was accompanied by two of her brothers and her uncle, Mr Husband.

It was one of those beautiful evenings which autumn sometimes gives us, and scarce one cloud lay cradled in the clear blue sky, as the funeral of Agnes moved slowly along the spacious streets and squares of the Scottish capital, which, with all its gaieties and beauties, was speedily left behind. The Queensferry road was next reached; and seldom does the varied and picturesque scenery which lines the whole of that noble highway appear so grand and imposing as it did on this memorable night. The sear and yellow leaf was just beginning to hint the departure of summer and the winter's approach. The

reapers were singing cheerfully as they wended their way homewards from the harvest fields. In the far west, the sun was going down in his glory, reflecting his rich and mellowed light on Edina's palaces and towers, and giving to the waters of the majestic Forth the appearance of one burnished sheet of living gold. Everything, indeed, in nature was as sublime and fascinating as either the heart of poetic devotion or of lofty piety could desire. To the funeral party, however, the charms of the scenery seemed to have fled. They were not interested in its beauties as of old. Often with her whose 'mortality' they were now accompanying to the grave, had they traversed that road on their way to and from Fifeshire; and none had more highly appreciated than she its numerous and variegated landscapes. Only a few months before they had surveyed it all, and together had expatiated on its lights and shades; but the thoughts of the living rose this eve to the happy and holy land of Beulah where she now dwelt, and to the rapturous exercises of song and love in which she was now perpetually engaged.

By the time they reached South Queensferry, the moon had risen, and was casting her silvery light upon the waters; the little island lying in the bosom of the river, seemed as if clothed in virgin white, to mourn for the maiden who shall never again hail it in passing. A few minutes were allowed for the required arrangements; the ferrymen soon got all ready, and

having carried down the coffin to the pier, it was lowered into the boat. The night was calm, and the stream was smooth; the rowers were hardy and weather-beaten men, but they spoke not a word. The only sounds that were heard being the regular beat of their oars, or the sighing of bereavement drawn from the guardians of the dead. The last time Agnes had gone over that stream, was in returning from a youthful party in her native town,—*then* all life and glee; *now*—‘O that we were wise; that we understood this; that we would consider our latter end!’

If the ride on the south side had awakened bitter reminiscences, that on the north of the Forth did not tend to allay them. On the contrary, every spot of ground there was, as it were, written all over with her name. On these Waldean hills she had rambled in girlhood; in that and the other farm-house she had made herself a favourite with old and young; and alike in the abodes of the rich and the huts of the poor, she bore a name that is yet held in affectionate remembrance. But what sounds are these which startle the mourners from their reverie? It is the bell of the old Abbey tolling the hour of eleven, and now the houses and spires of her birth-place appear in the sombre but imposing relief of moonlight. At length the carriages are arrested, and the remains of Agnes are borne into the room of that dwelling-house which but recently she had left in hope and health.

On that day week that she died she was buried.

Beneath the shade of the ancient abbey, and almost under the window of the apartment where the unfortunate Charles the First was born, her body now reposes, by the side of her sainted parents.

‘Lone in the rural cemet’ry thou’rt sleeping ;
 Sleep on in peace, thy pilgrimage is done.
 Wild through the sky the wintry winds are sweeping,
 But all thy storms are past—thy prize is won ;
 Thine was a weary race, but now ’tis run.
 Thy toils, thy tears, thy struggles all are past,
 And thou hast closed thine eyes in peaceful sleep at last.’

And now, dear reader, this narrative must be closed. Have you found out its threefold moral? If you have, you must by this time have resolved to put no longer any confidence in the mere externals of religion; to seek with all your heart the saving change produced by the Spirit of God in regeneration, and to ‘search the scriptures,’ as the only and infallible guides to CHRIST, to GOD, to HEAVEN. If you are *old*, and not yet ‘IN CHRIST,’ make haste to him; it is not yet too late. You have yet another ‘NOW.’ He waits upon you. If you are *middle aged*, and not yet out of the world, make haste to have the world crucified to you and you to the world. If you are *young*, *decide* at once to consecrate yourself to Christ, and you are certain to be received into his affections, and to find an interest in his divine favour. It is not to be found in the Bible that any who seek him *late* shall find him;

but it is written there, 'I love them that love me, and those that seek me EARLY shall find me.' And may the Lord in his mercy grant that such be now your happy experience! Amen.*

* See 'The Hiding Place,' chap xvii.

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