



Extract from Caleb Hamilton —

Whosoever believeth or thinketh to be saved
by his works, denieth that Christ is his Saviour,
that Christ died for him and that all things
pertain to Christ —

For how is he thy Saviour, if thou mightest save
thyself by thy works; or where should he die
for thee, if any works might have availed thee?

What is this, to say Christ died for thee?

Verily, that thou shouldst have died eternally
and Christ to deliver thee from death and
for thee and changed thy eternal death,
into his own death, for thou madest the Fault
and He suffered the punishment; and that
for the love he had to thee before thou wast born,
when thou hadst done neither good nor evil —
Now, seeing he hath paid thy debt, thou needest
not, neither canst thou pay it, but shouldst
be damned, if his blood were not —

But since he was punished for thee, thou shalt not
be punished — Fully He hath delivered thee
from the condemnation and from all evil,
and deserveth might of thee, not that thou wilt
acknowledge what he hath done for thee and bear
it in mind and that thou shouldst love him as Christ,
for his sake, both in word and deed, even as he
hath loved thee for nought and without reward.
Oh, how ready would we be to help others if we knew
his goodness and gentleness towards us, He is a good-
and gentle Saviour, for he death all for nought — It is,
I beseech you, follow his feet steps, whom all the world
ought to praise and worship — Amen

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A SELECTION

FROM

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A SELECTION
FROM
THE CORRESPONDENCE

OF THE

REV. J. T. NOTTIDGE, M.A.

LATE RECTOR OF ST. HELEN'S, AND ST. CLEMENTS, IPSWICH.

With a Prefatory Sketch

INCLUDING SOME UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF THE
REV. DR. BUCHANAN.

EDITED BY

THE REV. C. BRIDGES, M.A.

VICAR OF OLD NEWTON, SUFFOLK.

Seeleys.

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PREFATORY SKETCH.

THE servant of God, whom this volume introduces more fully to the Church, was no ordinary man, either in intellectual or Christian attainment. Many Ministers have been of more extensive repute, as their labours have spread over a wider surface. But while his retired habits and long-enfeebled health limited his own sphere of influence; few within that sphere have commanded more respect from the weight of Christian character and entire devotedness to their Master's work.

The REV. JOHN THOMAS NOTTIDGE was born at Bocking, Essex, February 23, 1776. His father was a woollen manufacturer in that place, who acquired a considerable fortune by upright industry; a recollection, of which his son was never ashamed, and which he recorded on a tablet raised to his father's memory. Mr. N. was one of several children. But as they all died either in infancy or in early childhood, he was brought up with the indulgences of a "father's son, tender and only-beloved in the sight of his mother."*

* Prov. iv. 3.

It is to be feared, however, that his education was conducted rather after the pattern of Adonijah than of Solomon,* as he once mentioned (in reference to his early life) the thought which darted through his mind, when reading prayers after his ordination—‘ This is the first thing I ever did in my life that I must finish.’ Certain it is, that the recollections of his school-days were ever tinged with bitterness. In passing through the village where he had been placed under a tutor about five and twenty years before, he remarked to a friend, that he could willingly cut that portion out of the history of his life. His friend, in the true spirit of the Gospel, reminded him, that ‘ it was a mercy, as he could not cut it out, that it could be blotted out.’

His father’s prospects and intentions for him were little in accordance with those which his Heavenly Father had ordered, and which he in due time accomplished. His parent’s ambition was to see him a county Magistrate, taking his rank in the Quarter Sessions—a distinction to which he had fair ground to aspire. With this view, therefore, he turned his attention to the law. But—as he pleasantly observed—‘ he once *followed* the law, but never *overtook* it.’ A friend witnessed an amusing illustration of this remark; one morning finding him at his London lodgings, stretched at full length on a table in his dressing-gown, poring over Blackstone. The new course however, into which he shortly after entered, as a fellow-commoner of Trinity College, Cambridge, was the crisis of his Christian life. In this sphere the incorruptible seed was first sown, and though its early growth was “ sore let and hindered,” its

* 1 Kings i. 6. with Prov. iv. 4—13.

ultimate fruit has proved an abundant harvest in the Church of God. He found in Dr. Edwards of Trinity Hall,* (into whose society he was providentially thrown) a valuable friend—well disciplined by a sound mind, and far more so—by Christian principles. Dr. E. watched over him with true kindness, counselled his college inexperience, and corrected many pecuniary irregularities, into which a young man, brought up as Mr. N. had been, on the lap of indulgence, was likely to fall at the commencement of an university life. Of this friend, Mr. N. spoke (alluding to this time of life) in one of those energetic modes of expression so characteristic of himself—‘Edwards was my *temporal* Saviour.’ Dr. E. took him home during the vacations, where he was in the habit of meeting that remarkable man of God, the Rev. John Newton; and another servant of his Master—not less honoured—the Rev. Dr. Buchanan. Mr. N. highly valued this occasional intercourse with Mr. Newton, and took all opportunities, when in London, of attending his ministry. But it was the latter, who was the Divinely-appointed instrument to sow the first seed of heavenly impression on his heart. Many years after, when looking on a portrait of Dr. Buchanan in a friend’s study, after standing intently gazing upon it for some moments, he broke out in his usual solemn, deep voice, when speaking of any thing that was stirring his soul—‘I owe every thing to that blessed man.’ A few letters of his spiritual father have been preserved among Mr. N.’s papers, and will be read with much interest. The lively sallies and sportive gaiety of his pen shew that he was writing in his most unbent and unstrung mood. Yet withal we see the care, with which this

* Afterwards a member of the College of Advocates in Doctors’ Commons, who died about a year and a half before Mr. N.

man of God fanned the little spark ; his painful anxiety, when it appeared to flicker in the socket ; and the sound Christian watchfulness, with which he cherished the kindling flame. It is much to be regretted, that no correspondence on the other side has been preserved among Dr. Buchanan's papers.

The first letter—besides its immediate object—gives an interesting record of the industry of the writer, who then had his high Indian prospects full in view.

Queen's College, July 13, 1794.

DEAR N——,

It gives me pleasure to hear that you are beginning to *live*. Now that you have entered upon a new system of things, your health of body will improve, your studies prosper, and peace of mind devolve on you, "like a mighty river, silent and deep." Even when appearances were least favourable, I retained this sentiment of you—"Forsan latet scintillula."* That spark I have more than once elicited ; it rests with you to fan it into a flame.

I have passed a good deal of my time since you left us, in visiting the adjacent counties. I should gladly accept of your invitation to Margate, but I have already engaged myself for the summer, on a plan of improvement and pleasure. Two gentlemen, whose views accord nearly with my own, pass much of their time with me.

I am pleased to find that you are able to enjoy something intellectual in a watering-place. If your health and your ardour for study continue, you will quickly become an ornament to virtue and polite literature.

My plan of study during the month's festival, is rather multi-

* "Perhaps the little spark is lying hid."

tudinous. Hebrew, Italian, French, Music, Mathematics, and the Belles Lettres, occupy my attention. So that you cannot expect me to encounter stenography.

Our postman, after dunning me in vain for some time, at last compels me to subscribe myself, dear Nottidge,

Your very sincere friend,

CLAUDIUS BUCHANAN.

The next letter evidently finds Mr. N. in that relaxed state of mind, which, until his principles were fully formed, was a besetting temptation. It was doubtless much connected with the defects of his education—and—as is too often, and very naturally, the case—connected with a corresponding relaxation of Christian resolution.

Queen's College, July 25, 1795.

DEAR N——,

Our subject next Thursday evening (at a debating Society.) is emigration. It is rumoured, that your abilities for oratory are above mediocrity. I wish you would convince us that this is true. Is it true, that you have resolution to write a little *every day*? I could believe any thing of you, if you would but return to those exercises of piety, which your conscience dictates. But till that hour comes, all your resolutions *must* prove temporary and nugatory. My good fellow, look around you. Is not your country falling? Perhaps a new order of things is at hand. In any event you may be called forth; to defend the old, or modify the new, system. Seek therefore piety as a man, eloquence as a citizen. Be not a man of silk, rolling down the stream of fellow-commoners, unheeded and unknown. Be magnanimous; have the fortitude to speak what you think in all places and on all occasions, when conscience suggests it. Sacrifice your friendships—infantine friendships, to virtue—that is to happiness. He who thinks that magnanimity consists in any thing less than despising fashion, when it interferes with

duty, has no pretensions to this virtue. He may have many other virtues, or rather semblances of virtue; but if he has not this, he is nothing. Most men who fight duels have not a spark of magnanimity, but are actuated by a base, cowardly fear. This is no paradox to those, who recollect how many false principles, pseudo-virtues, and counterfeit feelings, ever encrest the slave of fashion.

I court St. Cecilia a little, when my study of the modern languages permits. But that language, which, it is said, was taught by God, occupies my attention most. Woodhouse of Caius is senior Wrangler. Woolaston lectures on chemistry next term. Your plan of circumscribing the system of study is promising. I hope that temperance and exercise have by this time given you health sufficient for College use.

C. B.

DEAR N——,

Let not any want of resolution you may hitherto have manifested deter you from renewing your spiritual life. You must conquer or die.

I beg that you would keep in mind constantly—particularly when you have any aspirations after heaven—this heavenly encouragement—“Where sin abounded, grace doth much more abound.” This is to you an encouragement, which you may take from your very sins!*

If I thought that any thing but heaven could give you peace on earth, I would propose it. But you are different from others. You have tasted of the stream, and can never now be satisfied till you arrive at the fountain.

“Nunc retrorsum
Vela dare, atque iterare eursus
Cogor relictos.” †

* Yet not the Antinomian encouragement alluded to, Rom. vi. 1, with v. 20. Dr. B. would heartily have joined with the Apostle in protest—“God forbid!” Abounding sin is the occasion of the exuberant display of mercy. But this mercy can never be the motive to sin, or the excuse for continuance in it.

† Hor. Lib. i. Od. xxxi.

Which I would thus translate :—

“ I will return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now.” *

Dear N——, Your last I esteemed a chef d’œuvre. It was very animated, and abounded with brilliant figures. When you find the muse so compliant again, pray favour me with something more.

I hope science flourishes. Pray use a milk diet and Demosthenic walks, i. e.—daily walks up a hill. For your constitution seems to require a radical reform. This is Hippocrates’ advice to you.

I remain, Dear Nottidge,

With more affection than esteem, with more esteem than respect, and with more respect than I can almost express.

Yours,

C. BUCHANAN.

Queen’s College, Cambridge, Aug. 1795.

DEAR N——,

I have no doubt but that you are passing happy days. For is not “ the love of Christ shed abroad in your heart ?” Did not my own eyes behold in you “ old things pass away, and all things become new ?” You had long dwelt in Egyptian darkness ; you had so long fed on the rank flesh and garlic of worldly wisdom and pleasure ; that at last you *loathed* it, and said, “ Give me Manna.”

And did you not eat of Angel’s food ? Yes, you tasted of the true philosophy, and acknowledged that it was pleasant. And you *still* find it pleasant ; you are still holding converse with God ; you are still enjoying that tranquillity and sweetness of reflection, which ever accompanies fervent prayer.

You know, Nottidge, that you are a chosen witness of Christ, to witness his name before much people. Therefore let you and me contemplate our new dignity with joyful surprise. Let us

* Hosea ii. 7.

prosecute our course with resolute, magnanimous souls. What have we to fear? Surely you and I do not fear those who are *vulgarly* called the great. Are they learned? So are we. Are they rich? So are we. What *are* they? We are all that, and something more. Armed therefore with eternal truth, let us fulmine over this land the resistless eloquence of the everlasting gospel: for we know that the word of truth, even "in the mouth of babes and sucklings," is "sharper than a two-edged sword," and is able to subdue every high imagination, whether it vaunts itself in the rich, the proud, or the learned.

I hope you take regular exercise. I need not ask, whether you are regular in your hours of study; nor whether the fair plant of science is flourishing under your hands. You and I have now learned the value of a *day*. A day, *to us*, is a short life. I always improve those days best, in which I fancy to myself the arrival of death in the evening.

On the 10th of September I leave college for town. Before that time, I hope you will favour us with a visit. I have been in London till lately.

I am very anxious to hear from you; but I charge you not to write till the evening of some day, when you can say—'To-day I have endeavoured to do the will of my heavenly Father.' For I like best to hear news from heaven.

If this finds you in a torpid state, it will arouse you. If it finds you alive to duty, it will increase your fervour.

I remain, dear Nottidge, though not a valuable,
yet perhaps, a sincere, friend,

C. BUCHANAN.

Wednesday Evening, Jan. 3, 1796.

DEAR N——,

I hope I shall have time, before the post sets off, to write you *one* page at least.

I rejoice to find that you are seriously engaged in seeking peace. Only persevere; only be uniform a few weeks, a few days, and you shall—you *must*—have it. He who loved you so much as to die for you, has no pleasure in afflicting you without

cause. He taketh no pleasure in beholding his children (who are contented to come out from the world, and bear his reproach) pass their hours in heaviness, disconsolate and irresolute.

He himself hath set an example to you and me, how we ought to live. He had always one grand object in view; doing his Father's will. "He went about doing good" continually; his one grand object was to do good to the bodies or souls of men. Have you and I thought seriously of being useful either to the bodies or souls of men?

Our Saviour's life was a continued scene of activity. This is for our learning. Let no indolent habit ensnare our souls. Action is a great blessing to man. The trader, the ploughman, the man of business, all enjoy the hours that are devoted to their business. The man of parts alone, like you—the man of improved understanding—he who can teach others, he is unhappy, because he is unemployed.

I therefore will promise from this day forward to have one, and only one, great object in view: and that will be—doing good to the souls and bodies of men. Every thing must henceforth give way to this grand purpose. Every book I read, every conversation I hear, every walk I take, must assist in giving me new ideas or new helps in this work.

Only let me, for ten days, vie with the worldling in industry; and then you shall see the fruits.

My dear N——, whether you be heavy in heart, or merry, be *active*. Be active in prayer, or reading, or conversing, or walking, or riding. Sink not into fits of lethargy, which are death to the body, and death to the soul.

You seem to expect too rapid a revolution in yourself. But be content with the "day of small things." God could, as you wish, work a miracle, and restore you to health of body and to health of mind. "But he will be sought after." His invariable method of dealing with his children through every age of the Christian Church, is—"His Spirit co-operating with their prayers;" and leading their minds from one degree of knowledge to another, from one degree of confidence to another, from one degree of *peace* to another.

He has given you, in your past experience, every thing you

have a title to expect. He gave you, at Cambridge, to taste a few days of that peace, which the world knows not of; and which you attained at an *easy price*: and which you might have kept to this day (a seed then, but now a tree) shedding its kindly influence on many a hapless soul you may have since seen.

This peace you have once more attained, or are about to attain. "For he that seeks shall find." Keep the jewel safely. "Quench not the Spirit." Two things are necessary for this. 1st. Offend not God by any presumptuous sin. 2nd. Pray to Him daily, that His Spirit may dwell in you.

If you can read mathematics, pray do. I read them still. Anatomy, Botany, Astronomy, Chemistry, are highly useful to me in preaching to this refined age the everlasting gospel.

You seem to be distressed about something Doddridge has said. You need not. If Doddridge had written you this letter, he would conclude probably with beseeching you to seek God in prayer and in watchful conduct for some time; and assuring you, that the result must be what God has promised—Light to the understanding, and peace to the soul.

I remain, dear N——,

Yours affectionately,

C. BUCHANAN.

68, Coleman Street, Sat. Jan. 23, 1796.

DEAR N——,

Had I thought that Telemachus would have been gratified by hearing from Mentor, I should have written to you before now.

It gives me extreme pain to hear, that your indisposition is so serious; but I hope that what you allege is rather dictated by your fears than by fact. But whatever becomes of the body, let us take care of the mind.

Whatever may have been your mental experience since I last saw you—whether you have been holy in thought, word and deed, or whether you have been rioting in pleasures—it matters not, providing you come with a broken spirit, and use the means, which the Creator of the soul has appointed for its cure.

Wash in Jordan, and you are cured of the leprosy of sin.

Look on the brazen serpent, and your wounds are healed. No washing of your own is necessary; nor will it avail. No medicaments—no balsams—are necessary. Nothing more is necessary than what the malefactor used on the cross. “Believe, and thou art saved.” If you believe that the Son of God came down from heaven, Nottidge, you may well believe, that there is some virtue in his death.

‘But’—say you—‘I fear I cannot “believe to the saving of my soul.”’ There is a prayer appointed for such as you—“Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief.”

You see then a saving belief begins with the *will*: and the longer it is cherished, the brighter and the more satisfying it becomes. It proceeds from the dawn to the perfect day. And this progress is in some cases very rapid. If God means to take you soon to himself, your faith and hope will soon be strong and ardent.

When our Lord was leaving this world, he said he would send the Paraclete, the Spirit of God, which should enlighten the minds of those who wished it. Accordingly this Spirit came on the day of Pentecost, and resides in the world to this day. Its influence is secret, but very sensible in its effects. Like the wind, we “know not whence it comes, or whither it goeth;” but it sheds a “peace” on the soul “which passeth all understanding” of those who have not felt it. “It takes of the things of Jesus, and shews them to the soul.”* That is—it leads the soul to rest on the blood of Christ, as on a rock of salvation; it teaches the soul to believe, that, however polluted it may be, it is yet rendered pure and spotless in the sight of God, providing it can turn its eye from its own doings, its own endeavours, its own recommendations, to the full, free, all-satisfying righteousness of Christ. This is faith. And such a “faith purifies the heart from dead works.” It begets such a love to our Saviour, that we cannot *willingly* offend him. We, on the contrary, study to please him, not in words and actions merely, but in our *thoughts*. Thus is true faith known as a tree, by its fruits.

I cannot doubt but you will make yourself and me happy by

* John xvi. 15.

embracing that peace the Gospel offers to you. This peace is not offered on the *condition* of days or months of repentance. This would be to *buy* it. No! no! It is offered to a contrite spirit, fleeing from self, and *willing* to be indebted *for all* to Christ its Saviour. Your tears ought to flow at the thought of such a salvation. Mine do. It is a salvation so suited to an undone sinner. "The whole need not a physician" (saith our Saviour) "but they who are sick."* We are both sick. Let us then go to this Physician, "without money and without price." I know many who have been cured by this Physician. They *possess* all that happiness and all those virtues, which philosophers have *dreamed* of. "They rejoice in hope" daily. They are "loving and beloved" among their relatives and friends; and they look forward with joy to that time, when death shall open the gate, and shew them that glory they have so often contemplated by faith.

If I could leave the care of my church, I should certainly visit Nottidge. But I hope your recovery in body and mind will soon enable you to visit me. I am, dear Nottidge, with great affection.

Yours, for ever,

C. BUCHANAN.

*Homerton, at Mrs. Uffington's,
Wednesday, March 16, 1796.*

DEAR N——,

I write this at the kitchen fire-side upon my knee, while a girl of three years old holds the ink-stand. So I must be brief.

I have left Coleman street, and am now breathing the salubrious air of Homerton.

I do not sail for India till June, so that I hope to see you more than once at Cambridge before I depart.

On Tuesday I shall be engaged on India affairs, so that I doubt whether I can see you.

As usual I am not *angry* at your relapse; but I am very *sorry*. When you get to heaven at last, your greatest wonder will be, that you made such poor exertions on earth to obtain it.

Nottidge, do you think that even the happiness of heaven will abate the painful reflection of our long-continued ingratitude to our Saviour on earth? His eye is upon you and me. And his language constantly is—"Are these the returns?" Roll up your stone once more. A strength will at length be given you, sufficient to keep it up.

As long as you can read a page of your Bible every day, and commune a little with your heart; so long there is life. And while there is life, there is hope.

If you cannot pray for yourself, I request, as a particular favour, that you would pray for me very often: once every Sunday.

If you deny this request of a friend, you will remind me of what Paul says—"That every man seeks his own things, and not the things of Christ."*

If after all—you won't pray for yourself or me, I will pray for *you*, that your soul may be washed clean by the blood of Christ, that your flesh may come again like that of a child—that, in short, you may become a "new man," and lead a "new life."

I remain, dear N. yours, with more sincerity, and less profession than some,

C. BUCHANAN.

London, June 10, 1796.

MY DEAR N——,

I am happy to hear, that you have serious thoughts of entering the Ministry. I think you will be happier, when you have mastered a profession, and that you will be at rest, when you come to anchor. As a bar to the sacred profession, you must not plead temptations to sin, and to "do the things that you would not." It is a chief recommendation to the Minister, that he knoweth the evil of his own heart—his inherent mental weakness and depravity. Nor must you plead want of ability and qualification. I dare say you are as learned as honoured Mr. ——.

Nor ought you, in my judgment, to flinch, on account of any difficulties of subscription. For, in the first place, it is not to be expected, that—even if you be made up upon all the essential

* Phil. ii. 21.

points—to an exercised mind, like yours, every difficulty or shade of difficulty—literal or presumptive—can be removed at once. And in the second place—it is not to be expected, that you could well be clear of serious difficulties, *if you go out of the Church.*

And lastly, you must not plead bodily infirmity; because the Ministerial profession only requires labour, “according to that a man *hath*, and not according to that he hath not.” Possibly I had too little apprehensiveness on the subject. Perhaps others have too much. I commend you to the grace of God, who is able to give you light and peace!

And am ever yours,
C. BUCHANAN.

About a month after the above date this excellent counsellor sailed for the shores of India. There is no record of the continuance of this interesting correspondence. So far as it goes, it evidently describes a case of religious impression, that kept alive anxiety in the painful alternation of hope and fear.* The manifestations of the Divine principle were far from uniform. Sometimes indeed there was a total obscuration—a reckless course, when fearful violence was done to his better convictions, and most decided resolutions; and in this course his friend could not but “stand in doubt of him,” and fear, lest his “goodness should be as the morning cloud, and the early dew, which passeth away.”† His own retrospect of this era was full of humiliating sorrow. Broken vows and mockery of God were his self-abasing confessions. He could only look on himself, like the great Apostle, as raised up for “a pattern of long-suffering.”‡ The heart, fully “knowing its own bitterness,” § could scarcely conceive a similar example of exuberant mercy

* Gal. iv. 19, 20.

‡ 1 Tim. i. 13–16.

† Hosea vi. 4.

§ Prov. xiv. 10.

Such records as these—however ungodly men may abuse them—are the riches of the Church. Scripture Biography hides nothing. God's grace is magnified. The after-change of "marvellous light" is the more striking, from the contrast with Egyptian darkness. Men of the world in their consciences are powerfully affected by this victory of Omnipotence.* Others, who have been similar monuments of grace, fall down, and give God the glory. The present subject of this wondrous change did not fail to draw from the saddening recollections of the past a valuable lesson of Ministerial encouragement. Should he be saved, who need despair? Of whom need he despair? "As we have received mercy"—writes the Apostle, never forgetting his own case—"we faint not." †

Whether it was owing to his natural irresolution, to a conscious unfitness for the work, to the influence of a morbid temperament, or to the absence of his stimulating mentor; Mr. Nottidge's important purpose of entering into the Sacred Office was delayed for upwards of sixteen years. A long and dreary blank in his life! There was no living for any great object. Judging from a few scanty records, he seems to have been a prey to that natural restlessness, which belongs to an exercised and unoccupied mind. ‡ We have no very distinct traces of his religious impressions during this time. We find him writing to his mother sketches of two sermons, which he had heard from Mr. Newton. He also presented her with a copy of the *Olney Hymns*; and shortly after gave to both his parents *Doddridge's Rise and Progress*, entreating their perusal of it, on the ground, that 'he hoped he had picked up something from it.' And yet obviously

* See Acts ix. 21.—The Churches wonder. Gal. i. 23, 24. † 2 Cor. iv. 1.

‡ See his own description of his case, Letter p. 433.

the life of God in his soul could not be prospering in the atmosphere of inactivity. For however legitimate might be his continental excursion, or occasional pedestrian tour with one or other of his intimate friends; yet the interval to be filled up was far too vast to be employed only in such indulgences. Indeed his friends evidently discerned the baneful effect of this unsatisfactory existence, and wisely counselled a settlement in life, which, towards the close of this period, was providentially and happily accomplished by his union with his faithful and devoted wife.

Shortly following therefore this domestic settlement was the important decision, which proved the centre and source of his future usefulness—his entrance into the Holy Office. He was ordained to the Curacy of Halsted, in the year 1812, upon the nomination of the present venerable Vicar, the Rev. Dr. Adams. The great personal recommendation to this Curacy, was the opportunity of attending upon his father—then a widower in the decline of life, and to whom he was the only earthly stay. Most of his evenings were spent in reading to his parent such works, as were likely to interest and edify his mind. For some time he ministered to the parish from his father's house without material inconvenience, as the distance of seven miles was to him only an easy and pleasurable walk. And when a stronger sense of Ministerial obligation led him subsequently into residence in the parish, never did he omit his weekly visit to Bocking. On these occasions the Greek Testament was his companion. Whole Epistles were committed to memory—a practice to which he encouraged a friend, who once accompanied him in his walk, by the example of Zuingle, who wrote out all St. Paul's Epistles; and of Beza, who learnt by heart all the Gospels.

Meanwhile his views of Divine truth had been latterly increasing in distinctness, maturity, and practical influence. His progress in light had indeed been much retarded by a bewildering entanglement in the Baxterian Wood. The metaphysical thicket of the 'Aphorisms of Justification' grievously obscured the plain path-way, and "darkened counsel by words without knowledge."* A short residence however at Cambridge, soon after his marriage, brought him under the influence of that honoured Father of the Church, the Rev. Charles Simeon; and from his luminous apprehensions of the great doctrine, he caught a reflection, which scattered the cloud, and introduced the sun-beam.

His Ministry at Halsted was that of a man given to the work. In pastoral exercise it was full of tender sympathy—self-sacrificing—self-devoted. All considerations of convenience and comfort were made to yield to the grand object of "becoming all things to all men, if that by any means he might save some." † In the pulpit he was solemn, earnest, and affectionate. His statements were scripturally accurate; yet perhaps somewhat wanting in directness, an evil that enervated their full efficiency. Nevertheless, the Lord did set his seal to his own rule—"Them that honour me I will honour." ‡ He affixed his clear stamp upon the Ministry of his devoted servant; and a company were gathered into the true Church, who will be "his hope, and joy, and crown of rejoicing in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ at his coming." §

A combination of providential circumstances brought his Halsted ministry to a termination, after a period of about five or six years. He had become possessed of the advowson of the two consolidated parishes, St.

* Job xxxviii. 2.

‡ 1 Sam. ii. 30.

† 1 Cor. ix. 22.

§ 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20.

Helen's and St. Clement's, Ipswich ; and an opening for his gratuitous services during the life of the aged incumbent directed his removal to that place. There can be no doubt but this wider sphere (including nearly the last thirty years of his life) more fully developed the power and solid weight of his character. It was very soon acknowledged, that no common man had come among them—but one, whose fortune and talents commanded a station ; yet one who, “ clothed with humility,” had no love for pre-eminence ”—who was living only for his Master and his Church—who counted the cross of Christ his glory—its spirit his profession—its obligations his high and privileged service. Such a one could not fail of commanding influence of a far higher and more useful efficiency than worldly consideration. It was the influence of Christian consistency in all its fair symmetry and proportion. Those who loved not his principles, could not but reverence the holder of them. “ They feared him, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him.”* In the Church his spiritual character was more effective—“ The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips ; he walked with God in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity.” †

Nor was his influence confined within his pastoral sphere. Already had many among his family connexions “ known and read the living epistle ” to their lasting profit. So fruitful had been the exercise of that “ wisdom, that wins souls ” for heaven. ‡ The contrast of his feeble, spare, attenuated form, with the emphatic utterance of a holy and spiritual mind, could not fail of making impression. A happy comment was made by one to the friend who introduced him—‘ You told

* Mark vi. 20.

† Mal. ii. 6.

‡ Prov. xi. 30.

me, I should find him a shadow. I did so. But it was the shadow of a heavenly substance.' Very attractive was the tree in its old age. No tree, "flourishing" in white blossoms, as the almond-tree,* could be more full of blossom and fruit at once. If this be an anomaly in the physical world, it is in analogy with the work of Divine grace; which, like "the tree of life," in the new Jerusalem, "bears twelve manner of fruits, and yieldeth her fruit every month."†

Nor was this influence restricted to spiritual matters. Though his consideration of the consciences of others made him averse to use the legitimate weight of a landlord on his estate; yet it was not unfrequent for some of his tenantry to ask his counsel, in their use of the elective franchise. Members of his flock in Ipswich placed the same confidence in him; and it is well known, that on one occasion the election in the Borough was decided by votes, which were spontaneously referred to him—not as a political partizan of either candidate—but as one whose judgment was known to be grounded on deep and earnest prayer, and on the principles of the word of God.

This brief sketch precludes any minute detail of his Ministry at Ipswich. And indeed this is rendered needless, from the full exhibition, with which two of his valued fellow-labourers have memorialized their departed friend.‡ Suffice it to say, that his pulpit ministrations were, for the most part, an accurate picture of himself—in mind—in soul—alas! also in

* Ecces. xii. 5—a beautiful illustration of Prov. xvi. 31. See Holden and Wardlaw on the passage.

† Rev. xxii. 2.

‡ "The Power of Divine Grace," By the Rev. J. W. Reeve, Minister of Trinity Church, now of Portman Chapel, London. "Barnabas," by the Rev. W. W. Woodhouse, Curate, now Rector of the parishes. (Seeleys, London, Hunt, Ipswich.)

health. Often were they characterized by profound thought, and vivid and original illustration. Always were they marked by spiritual unction. But too often was their point enfeebled by the enervation of his physical temperament. From this very circumstance of their personal identity, they failed in extensive efficiency to his people. Few could throw themselves into his mould. His ideas and general elevation of mind were in a world of intellect as well as spirituality, with which the ordinary course of thoughtless hearers had no sympathy. Sometimes indeed he did strike them by a heart-stirring, thrilling appeal, that they could not wholly put aside. But for the most part, it was so far clouded from their sight, that it failed to arrest. Far too deep also were his views for the professor, whose eye never penetrates beyond the surface of the Gospel. And too often the length and involved structure of his sentences hid their valuable substance from the average intelligence of the poor. His real sphere, therefore, of pulpit instruction, was comparatively limited. But to those, who were privileged to enter fully into his setting forth of Divine truth and Christian experience, he was indeed a special "gift of God—a pastor after his heart, who fed his people with knowledge and understanding!"*

Perhaps however few ministrations have been so strongly marked by inequality, arising chiefly from constitutional causes. No one could hear him without seeing a superior mind, an acute intellect, and a clear statement of the great doctrines of the Gospel. Seldom did he produce a sermon without some uncommon thoughts, either of exquisite beauty, or of deep and solid instructiveness. Yet often physical or mental effort failed to carry them out to their complete de-

* Jer. ii. 15.

velopment. Many of his most striking ideas halted, for want of power to progress in their full light and energy. Sustained effort throughout a whole sermon upon a high level, was latterly rather the exception than the rule.

The same inequality was visible in his ordinary life of latter years. When his head was clear, his conversational powers were of the highest order. In clerical meetings, his brethren listened to the instruction of a wise father, and were always ready by their pens to give permanency to some valuable dictum from his mouth. His intercourse with friends, was masculine conversation in Christian fellowship. Recollections of Shakespeare and the ancient classics were often brilliantly applied. He lighted up in an argument with lively interest. On one such occasion, the foolish objection of the Infidel (so admirably combated by Dr. Chalmers, in his *Astronomical Discourses*) came up—that the puny affairs of men cannot be supposed to be the subject of Divine superintendence. He quite kindled into animation in the discussion, and when the atheistical words of the ancient objector were quoted, as again produced in modern times—‘*Magna Dicuntur ; parva negligunt*’*—he exclaimed—‘These gentlemen seem to forget, that our God is not only infinitely great, but infinitely little.’ He then pointed to that beautiful microscopic illustration in the Hyacinth bulb, which shews upwards of six flowers in successive diminution, till its power of detention ceases. Long however ere he reached the age of man—and ere “his natural force was abated,” so far as intellectual power was concerned, “the grasshopper was” often “a burden ;” † and, except when roused by some emergency,

* The gods care for great affairs, but neglect smaller matters.

† Eccles. xii. 5.

hours were spent in a state of torpor, scarcely elevated above animal existence.

Perhaps the weariness of incessant pain, acting upon a peculiar temperament, may have tended to produce this distressing lassitude. For the first forty years of his life—he has stated—that he was not conscious of a day without pain. His sufferings also were greatly aggravated by an excessive sensibility, which—however it might qualify him for a deeper exercise of Christian sympathy—he felt to be an evil strongly to be resisted. ‘I envy’—he would say—‘the skin of a ploughman or a rhinoceros.’ His keen perception of natural infirmity, stimulated an incessant conflict to triumph over the flesh.

It is not to be wondered at, that with all this weight of natural depression, (deeply aggravated by the loss of his beloved wife) he should need at once repose and diversion of mind. He would often therefore seek a little refuge from care and sorrow in intercourse with endeared friends. And here indeed the genuine cheerful character of his religion fully displayed itself. The sunbeam played upon his deep careworn countenance, breaking through the thick clouds of bodily weakness, and through even that darker cloud, which a view of the lightest shadow of sin cannot but cast around us. When at home, in tolerable health, and with his sympathies of interest alive, his playfulness with children was in ready flow. He would enter with them into the amusement of a puzzle, or some similar engaging exercise. It seemed a natural effort to him to interest and amuse by drawing on the resources of his well-stored mind, in order by some aptly-applied incident or pleasant wit, to fix a wholesome or kindly impression. Indeed he might be said to have illustrated those lines of Hudibras, which he was used to quote—

True piety is still the same,
 Whether she win, or lose the game.
 True as the dial to the sun,
 Altho' it be not shin'd upon.

His latter days of trial were greatly cheered by the gathering around him of a large increase of brethren, faithful and beloved, all of whom were animated by one spirit of affectionate veneration for his character, deference to his judgment, and sympathy in his afflictions. Most of all did he acknowledge the special mercy of having been permitted to build (though at great personal sacrifice) a Church in his most populous parish, and of witnessing its flourishing fruitfulness under the labour of two devoted servants of his Master,* both of whom count their connection with himself among the richest privileges of their lives.

And now the time was hastening on, when this holy man, after having "served his own generation by the will of God, would fall asleep." † Dec. 30, 1846, he caught a cold on a journey to Woodbridge, which shortly evinced the depressing symptoms of the influenza, and ended in a prostration of strength, from which he was unable to rally. The early part of his illness was much clouded by the effect of disease, so that "the light was neither clear nor dark." But "at evening-time"—the last rays of the setting sun were "light" ‡ indeed—the harbinger of the unclouded day. Much Scripture was read to him with manifest satisfaction to his soul. Occasionally he was able to make a short comment with a flash of his former vigor. || He could

* The Rev. Richard Mosley, now Vicar of Rotherham, Yorkshire, and the Rev. J. W. Reeve, ut supra.

† Acts xiii. 38.

‡ Zech. xiv. 6, 7.

|| 'Read'—said he on one occasion—"Ps. cxxx. verse by verse, and I will endeavour, if the Lord will, to make some remarks—

Verse 1. 'The depths are always too deep for any thing but infinite love

then “set to his seal that God was true.” To the mention of the Apostle’s confidence—“I know whom I have believed”—he replied—‘*Yes—it’s all true, and it all comes home to me with the demonstration of a problem of Newton.*’ In the midst of intense suffering he was enabled to hold fast his support. ‘*The disposition*’—said he, in answer to an enquiry on this point—‘*is to say—“All is well ;” and there cannot be a greater proof of the Lord working in me.*’ To an endeared friend who came to see him—he said—‘*God is doing his will with me ; and with that I am satisfied—quite satisfied.*’ At intervals he was heard—‘*Jesus is waiting to perform the last act—of receiving me.*’ Again—‘*Lord—help me !—and he says—I will help thee—wonderfully has he helped me—wonderfully—wonderfully !*’ Soon after he seemed to be in prayer, and the words were heard—‘*All in heaven together—friends—connections.*’ At another time—‘*He won’t be long—He won’t be long—Cherubim and Seraphim !*’ Next day—after a restless night—‘*Joyful—awful work !*’ Again—raising his eyes and hands in affectionate acknowledgment of something done for him—‘*O for that Almighty smile !*’ *

The agonies of death were coming on, and it was only at intervals that broken words or sentences could be understood—‘*The Lord will fulfil all his holy will and power to extricate us from.* The comparative depth, therefore, is of little importance.

Verse 2. Mark that word *attentive*. It is not—Let me hear thy voice. But do thou hear mine. And thou must be *attentive* to my cry : for it is so feeble, that it cannot be otherwise heard.

Verse 4. Well : let’s see. It will take a year to talk on that verse as we should do.’

* The Bishop of Calcutta having received from a friend some details of Mr. N’s. last illness, observed ; that he had scarcely ever heard anything more impressive than these two last expressions. At a large meeting of twenty-eight Clergy, he gave a brief sketch of Mr. N’s character, and repeated the above expressions with solemn emphasis as his dying experience.

in me—Faithful arms—underneath are the everlasting arms—aye—aye—What day is it? Thursday. ‘*Blessed—blessed Thursday.*’ Truly blessed it was to him—the day of entrance into his everlasting joy—January 21, 1847, in his seventy-first year.

On the 30th inst. the precious remains were consigned to their resting-place, waiting the resurrection of the just. The Mayor of the town, the whole body of the Clergy of the town (with only one or two exceptions from necessity) together with the ministers of all the Dissenting congregations, and a considerable number of the Clergy of the neighbourhood, met together on this solemn occasion to do honour to this servant of God, or rather to glorify God in him.

“My Father, my Father! the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!”*

Long will the loss be felt by those, to whom his holy counsel, his deep experience, the Divine unction of his words, and the consistent example of his life were ever present, as a stimulating encouragement in time of indolence, or the hour of trial. Yet the bond of union between us is unbroken—Christ is *with him and with us*. Ere long we shall be one—the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant—united in one everlasting chorus of praise before “the throne of God and the Lamb.”

* 2 Kings ii. 12; xiii. 14.

It has been thought, that a volume of letters would be the most acceptable and characteristic memorial of this excellent man. His correspondence, like that of his venerable friend, was genuine ‘Cardiphonia’—the utterance of the heart—the “bubbling up of a good matter” * as from the spring-head within—*Christus in corde*. This natural flow seemed to bring the most minute particles of every-day life under the influence of a heavenly atmosphere. †

Added to which—“the Lord had given to him” a large measure of that “tongue of the learned,” which fitted his dear Son for his offices of sympathy. ‡ Few were better qualified, both from tenderness of spirit, and from experimental wisdom, to deal with the anxious exercises of the Christian mind. His own painful trials were, eventually, the riches of his ministry; and, when in his usual health, “the pen of a ready writer” was employed to “comfort them that were in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith he himself was comforted of God.” §

* Psalm xlv. i.

† Thus writing to Mrs. N. from an Inn—“I have taken my tea without my usual companion; and it was not like my home cup of tea. But on a journey we must be thankful for such things as we can get, and wait for comforts domestic till we get home. This makes home desirable, and makes us think of it, and long for it all the way. Just so would heaven be to the Christian traveller, if he were careful to dwell on the thought of the enjoyments there, and how superior they are to all he has on the road. Dearest L. may we, amid all the comfort that the Lord has given us on earth, and the comfort he has made us to each other, remember the infinitely better comforts in store for us in our real home!”

Again—in offering himself to tea with an endeared friend—“If the thing abstractly and hereafter *conditional* in these presents consist with your engagements, I purpose to call on you before six, for a cup of tea, with all the appurtenances thereto belonging, or in any wise appertaining; and with the hope, (may God fulfil it!) of an invisible party to the company, who blesses those who expect and welcome Him.”

‡ Isaiah l. 4.

§ 2 Cor. i. 4.

The Editor has felt much difficulty in selecting from a large and diversified mass of correspondence. As many letters derive their interest from the circumstances and persons to which they were intended to apply, they cannot always command the same measure of interest with the general reader. And yet it is hoped, that few, if any, will be found without some profitable excitement. But not unfrequently will it be seen, that Mr. Nottidge's thoughts were those of no ordinary mind. The beauty of his expressions often presents gems of the purest brilliancy, well set in admirable finishing of taste—precious truths, adorned with polished elegance and glowing originality—as Mr. Newton described Archbishop Leighton's Lectures—“apples of gold in pictures of silver.”*

Sometimes indeed, from various causes, valuable thoughts seem to have been expressed in a mist. This might be in some of his earlier letters, ere he was brought habitually to live in the pure atmosphere of the gospel, and when the heartfelt experience of the ruin was more vividly realized, than the apprehension of the remedy. The physical causes, already adverted to, too often clouded intellectual clearness.

It is probable, therefore, that his somewhat morbid temperament may give an occasional tinge to his correspondence. And perhaps some demur may be felt as to the propriety of giving so much of his individual feelings. But it could not be subtracted, without at the same time cutting off much that was beautiful; and no survivor is left, who would be wounded by the detail. However, a motive for retention, far more powerful than mere personal consideration, was the hope, that this graphical delineation of physical

* Prov. xxv. 11.

and spiritual depression, and the re-action of the one upon the other, might cheer some Christians of the like temperament, by the demonstration, that no “strange thing has happened unto them,” but “that the same afflictions are accomplished in their brethren that are in the world!” *

This portraiture also, we trust, may be importantly useful; not only in the way of consolation under constitutional infirmity, but as stimulating to active and habitual resistance. Here was no passive inactivity—no indolent lying down under the pressure. It was constant self-dissatisfaction, urging to unceasing conflict, and sustained in the endurance by an unshaken confidence in the end. He kept the field to the last, as the token of decisive victory. It might be, that “a troop should overcome;” but he knew that “he should overcome at the last.” † And therefore, like Christian in the deadly conflict with Apollyon, he caught the sword, which for a moment had dropped from his hand, and with a successful thrust prostrated his foe to the ground “Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy, though I fall, I shall rise again; though I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me.” ‡

Nor—again,—were the confessions of this tried servant of God those of the heartless professor. If he were constrained to cry—“My soul cleaveth unto the dust”—ever and anon was the cry sent up for quickening grace.§ Well he knew, that “weeping endured for the night” only; and with intense desire and assured confidence—even more than that of the watchers in the temple—did he wait for the “joy that cometh in the morning.” || And even when “walking in” more continued “darkness, and having no light”—his

* 1 Peter iv. 12; v. 9.

† Gen. xlix. 19

‡ Mic. vii. 8.

§ Psalm cxix. 25.

|| 1b. xxx. 5. cxix. 6.

“ trust and stay ” were reposed, where disappointment is never known.* Like one of old—whose inward trials were not dissimilar to his own, he could cleave to his God—“ Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.”†

Let not then this morbid temperament, or these spiritual agitations, be identified with religious gloom. *The former* may be traced exclusively to physical causes, utterly remote from, and unconnected with, religion. A painful dispensation indeed it is. But it is doubtless ordained by sovereign wisdom and love for the establishment of many Christian graces—most especially for that consummating one—“ waiting for the adoption—to wit—the redemption of the body.” and its transformation into the likeness of its glorified Lord.‡ *The latter* is not less unconnected with the gloom. The joy of faith lives in the absence of feeling. The darkest hour is cheered by a lively hope.§ Dark as may be the cloud, the bow of the covenant is seen; and if—as the disciples of old—we “ fear, as we enter into the cloud; ” yet communion with our God is the privilege, confidence and happy obedience the result.|| The Lord deals with his children according to the pleasure of his own will; but always with the end—“ that the trial of their faith ”—however dark its present aspect—“ shall be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” ¶

† Is. l. 10. † Job xiii. 15. ‡ Rom. viii. 23. Phil. iii. 20.
§ 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. || Luke ix. 34, 35. ¶ 1 Pet. i. 7.

Old Newton Vicarage,

Nov. 25, 1848.

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PART I.



LETTERS TO MRS. NOTTIDGE.



THE selection now about to be given from Mr. Notidge's valuable correspondence, will be suitably commenced by 'Letters to a Wife'—to the endeared partner of his cares, joys, and sorrows, for five-and-twenty years, and one who, for the greater part of that period, was a most efficient helper to him in his Master's work. Many affecting allusions will be found to that bereavement, with which, at the close of this period, it pleased his Heavenly Father to afflict him. From that time the whole face of the earth changed to him ; and notwithstanding all the soothing tenderness of the most endearing sympathy, it was indeed a dreary wilderness to the close of his days. To one of his correspondents he describes himself thus, in his fine but dark touches :—' I was once the richest man in the world, and am now, as to this world, the poorest. I have not near me any one to please, any one to care for. I have not that, which, to a delicate mind, is the highest of all gratifications, the sweet opportunity of occasionally yielding one's own inclination to that of another. I stalk sometimes from room to room, with a full sense of the empty privilege of unmitigated despotism ; and must be indebted to my own servants for the novelty

of remonstrance, or the pleasure of concession. This gives great room for the unlimited exercise of the imagination.' &c.

The first letter in this series was written shortly after his marriage. It is given, not only for its practical instruction, but as an admirable specimen of that tender faithfulness, so important for the accomplishment of one of the primary ends of that holy ordinance. It might be, that indolence needed reproof at that early period, when, in a transition-state into a new course of habits, Mrs. N's. Christian principles were scarcely formed in practical exercise. But unquestionably those that knew her in the open and sustained profession of the gospel, could ever point to her as a stimulating example of self-denial and self-devotedness.

LETTERS.

LETTER I.

Trinity College, January 26, 1811.

MY DEAR L.

You say—‘*Late hours* in a morning are a sad hindrance to my devotions.’ Oh! my L. let me be faithful to you. What is this in effect but saying—that ‘*Indolence* in a morning is a sad hindrance to my devotions.’? Is it so, that in your mother’s house, of the same principles as yourself, you have not opportunity for prayer? Where shall we look for the fault, my dearest, but in yourself? You have a light in your room; you can have a fire, if you please; and yet you cannot manage to be up and be dressed by eight o’clock. What shall we think of ourselves, when the end of life comes, and the purposes of it are unaccomplished? Hear the word of the Lord—“Whosoever will come after me, *let him deny himself*, and take up his cross, and follow me.”* Self-denial is not a part, or a consequence, of the religion of Jesus. It is not included in, or linked to, it; but it is the religion itself. I can imagine, that among dissatisfied persons you

* Mark viii. 34.

might find a difficulty in maintaining the regular seasons of devotion. But let it not be supposed, you have so little exertion or contrivance, that a visit to your mother shall be the occasion of sin. We must be in a measure independent of circumstances; and we may. I have known a man—not at all stronger than myself—rise in the bleak mornings of March, to spend from half an hour to an hour in prayer, in a room without a fire. Get a large thick woollen cloak, if you suffer from cold. I am now generally half an hour at least, from the time I am quite dressed, before I come to the fire. We ought to suffer in such a case, if it were necessary, but we need not even suffer.

Your affectionate

N.

LETTER II.

Bocking, Aug. 3, 1811.

I write my address in short-hand, that it may not accidentally catch a roving eye, and reveal a tenderness, which I have a pleasure in keeping entirely to ourselves. I have nearly finished my sermon, and therefore feel as if I may dedicate a little time to you. Yet I ought not for that reason to be a trifler. Our affection, dearest L. is too valuable a treasure, too accountable a gift, to make it the occasion of mere chat. Something, if the Lord pleases, I would willingly say, that should be a word in season, and excite both your heart and my own, to be more grateful for his abundant loving-kindness to us, to love him more warmly, and to serve him more faithfully. Though I

appear to have done very little to-day (for I have written a very small portion of fresh materials) yet I have learned a lesson, which indeed I ought to have had pretty much by heart a long time ago—I mean the benefit of confining my attention to one point. From twelve o'clock I have done little else but write my sermon or revise it ; and in the course of that time I have nearly brought it into a shape, in which it may be preached. It is the want of this sort of perseverance, that prevents our progress in every thing. We are ever suffering petty interruptions of worldly business, either to prevent our beginning, or continuing to give our attention to our proper business. And if this habit is not narrowly watched, it brings our mind into a state so estranged from piety, and so full of the world, that at last we differ very little from those that live without God, except that we are—which they are not—guilty of using, or rather abusing, all the means of grace.

In about an hour we shall each of us probably lie down in our solitary beds—yet not solitary, for I would indeed believe, that our Lord will, whether sleeping or waking, “give his angels charge over us, to keep us in all our ways,” and that they are “sent forth to minister unto us, as the heirs of salvation.” I have not felt low to-day, but at times I am very sensible of that solitary feeling, of which I experienced so much, when I was unmarried. What should I have done, if I had been sent, as Mr. Newton was, to Africa for more than half the year? May the recollection of this short absence stimulate us to improve the time when we are together, in stirring up each other's minds with Divine truth, and animating each other to greater exertions in the work of the Lord, both as respects our own souls, and the souls of others! And especially may it, under grace, check me, when a peevish

word is upon my mouth, lest I should provoke the Lord to separate us again for a longer time! If we seek him, and obey him, he will I, trust, do us good by all Providences, whether painful or agreeable to the flesh.

Believe me,
Your grateful and affectionate.
N.

LETTER III.

Little Waltham, Feb. 19, 1812.

I have the pleasure, dear L. to say I am very much better than I was when I left you. My languor has almost wholly subsided, and I can look upon my journey at present, without any of those cowardly, and—to a Christian—disgraceful, feelings, which discomposed me this morning. I have continual reason to ask myself the question, which the Apostle puts to the Galatians—“Have ye suffered so many things in vain?”* All I suffer seems to be in vain. I get no wiser. No sooner is the flesh a little inconvenienced, than I begin to fret, as if the slight discomfort I have ever been called to endure were worth a thought; or as if I did not know by countless deliverances, that there is a Sun behind the cloud that meets my eye, or a day to succeed the present night. The savages are said, the first time they saw the sun set, to have concluded it was gone for ever; and such are my foolish and sinful feelings, every time the Lord is

* Gal. iii. 4.

pleased to darken the usually pleasing prospect which every day affords.

This is a deep and sore reflection to me. There can be no acquirement of spiritual experience, while this is the case. The Apostle, speaking to the Romans of those, who are brought into a state of "justification by faith" in Jesus Christ, describes them as introduced thereby into a gracious condition, in which "they rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And" (he proceeds) "not only so; but we glory in tribulation also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given us." * But if the fruit of "tribulation" be not "patience," it never can produce the further fruit of "experience." They that having often suffered, and fretted, find that they increase their sufferings by that fretting, learn at length to suffer without fretting, and take the fatherly correction of God patiently. They will learn "experience" by it; and that "experience" will lead them to such a sweet and heavenly rest and assurance in the friendship and fatherly protection of God, that by degrees they live above the things that are seen, and have their "conversation in Heaven." But if we have all to learn over again every time, how great reason have we to fear that we should reach the end of life without having learnt how to live, when yet life is all the opportunity we have to prepare for eternity! Pray for me, that what the Lord sends "to humble me, and prove me, and do me good at the latter end," may not be all rendered vain to me by an impatient temper, which makes me blind and

* Rom. v. 1-5.

deaf to every improvable event, and shuts out wisdom from my soul.

Yours affectionately,
N.

LETTER IV.

Hulsted, July 4, 1814.

DEAREST L.

I have been principally occupied in attempts at prayer and self-examination, and was indulged with something of an attentive mind. I wrote the greater part of Bishop Taylor's prayer from memory—an exercise, that I think I have sometimes found to be beneficial. I find that by dwelling on one thing, when there is an activity of attention in the mind (for otherwise it may be the opposite effect) we bring out the meaning and force of the expressions; and it is rendered vastly more serviceable for future use. Sometimes also it may be a very good employment, to make the words of a prayer the materials of self-examination. This shews the state of the mind, whether we can pray in those words or not; suggests what alterations we ought to make; and so by continually comparing our inward experience and the words of a good, sound prayer, we perhaps, under the Divine blessing, are led to see what deficiencies there are in our profession, which we may not have seen so distinctly before. And the prayer in the mean time, by successive alterations, becomes the language we can truly speak in the presence of the Almighty, with the advantage of the assistance of better expressions, than perhaps we could have devised for ourselves, if we had attempted it entirely without assistance. I rose this morning about

seven, walked for the purpose of prayer till eight, breakfasted, and after speaking a little on Matt. v. 10, 11, 12, and prayer, I made my little arrangements.

Indeed, dear L. I have quite forgotten the direction of the conversation we had on the subject you mention. I remember we did converse about it. But the particulars are all fled. I remember quoting 1 Cor. ii. 15. And I think I suggested this as the meaning of it: "He that is spiritual"—having been himself in a natural and unconverted state—can judge thoroughly of the general features of the experience of every mind in that state. He knew the motives he was swayed by, the objects he pursued at that time; and this furnishes him with a key to the hearts and lives of the generality of mankind. But he himself lies open to no such inspection from them; for they are utter strangers to his experience. His motives they never felt. The objects he pursues they cannot estimate, for they can only be "spiritually discerned."

I know not how, dear L. to deal with your anxiety about ——. My own feelings are exactly the same. I wish more distinct expression, and more continuance of certain appearances. But then I think again, that I have always blundered, when I have acted on my own view of spiritual matters. When I have seen young Christians, as ———, given to much conversation; though it has appeared to be very good, and perhaps edifying to the bystanders, I have trembled, lest they were carrying too much sail. All I can do is to hope that from some things we have witnessed, there must be a good work begun, and to trust that He who began will carry it on, and when I can, to enquire of Him, and pray for these things. Keep your mind, dearest L. as much as possible from planning about coming home, lest you should ever

indulge any thing of an impatient feeling where it is our especial duty to wait the Lord's will—to consider in what spot we shall be most useful, and where we may best promote the good of souls—and to stay there till His Providence says—"You may go." Oh! what would you not feel, if any part of the unspeakably important process that is now going on, were hurried, or deranged even for a moment! I have felt your absence at times very sorely. But I dare not express a wish, when I consider what you are about; and though I wish to come up to you, I know not how to accomplish it. The Lord direct and guide our ways!

Remember me most affectionately to dear Mother and all, particularly to ——. May she be enabled to "work out her salvation with fear and trembling," and to "cast all her care upon God!"

Yours,

N.

LETTER V.

1815.

DEAREST L.

You observed this morning, that you had frequently found our seasons of separation especially profitable. Let us endeavour, with the Lord's assistance, to draw some profit from this, and learn some lesson, which may not only be pertinent to the present occurrence, but furnish some important direction for the future. Now I am here, I naturally look back on yesterday; and the recollection divides itself into two principal heads—How the day might have been better spent; and

secondly, how the disappointment of to-day (so far as I dare call anything a disappointment, which is in the order of Providence) might have been avoided by a more prudent and conscientious proceeding on my part. Both these considerations lead me to one and the same grand practical point—viz., ‘How faintly the love of God, and a desire to please Him, and to please Him in preference to pleasing ourselves and others, work in our hearts!’ We say, ‘I must do thus and thus to-day. I must see my dear friends; I must call on such a one. They will take it kind, and it will appear unkind and negligent, if I do not.’ Well, this is true, and so the thing is done, and the end is answered. You wish to be thought kind, and you are thought kind. You wish to please, and you do please. But we hardly ever say, ‘I must do thus and thus for God to-day; for he will approve it. It will secure His “loving-kindness, which is better than life” itself, and if I do not do it, He will take it unkind.’ But this thought does not prevail with us. Day after day we load our consciences with these neglects, which, unless healed by the blood of Jesus, applied by faith, and the sincerity of our repentance proved by a change of conduct, will appear against us at the great day to our everlasting confusion. And the Lord is pleased to awaken our attention to these unkindnesses by coupling with them disappointments respecting the things, which we thus foolishly prefer to His approbation and His work. He makes us feel, that if we had not been out of the way of duty, such things would not have happened to us. I had done yesterday morning very little, and almost nothing towards preparing my sermon, and I have all my ministry galled by the bitter consequences of such neglect, and I might very reasonably have said—‘Now this must be done,

for it will please God.' Suppose I call on two or three friends this morning, and interchange a few kind sentences, is it likely that the thought of this will repay me for neglecting the Lord's work? Is it worth while to neglect my sermon for half-an-hour's chat with Mr. ——. Is it for this I must shew myself unkind to the Lord? Can I be justly charged with unkindness to him, if I omit seeing him, in order that I might please the Lord? I did not argue thus, when I came home, because nothing had yet touched me, that diminished my present comforts. But now that I am detained from my wife and my home, I begin to argue in this manner, and to perceive, that if I had resigned these pleasures to stay at home and please the Lord, and finish a part of the work which He has given me to do, that I should then have been in the way when —— arrived, and should probably have had time enough to have gone to ——, and have finished all my business.

Shall we not learn, dear L. by this to be always in the Lord's work, to finish that first, to say—'Well! I *must* do this, for my best friend will think it unkind if I do not?' Shall we not learn at last that self-seeking is self-undoing, and that, if we would secure our own interests, we must wholly dedicate ourselves to God, and dispatch what we have to do for Him first? Oh! how gladly would I have left all my friends unvisited for the pleasure of being now with you! But then I should not have thought of pleasing the Lord, but only of pleasing ourselves,—perhaps I ought to say *myself*, which is always uppermost. In this view I can call my disappointment a gain, because it has made me find how I came to disappoint myself, and that in the neglect which brought it about there was a sin against God—a sin of which I am daily and

hourly guilty ; and so it was for His honour, and my instruction and correction, that I should be disappointed. And I hope and pray that we may both remember the occurrence in this light every day and all day long, and that I may turn with determined and constant preference to the execution of His work, and study to be found of Him in peace, “and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.” Then we shall find, that He will give us abundantly more even here than we give up for Him, and in the world to come eternal glory. If He impresses these things duly upon our hearts, how little reason shall we have to regret this temporary separation ! In other respects too He has made me as comfortable as I can be here without you.

Your affectionate

N.

LETTER VI.

Green Dragon, Bishopsgate Street, Sept. 27, 1819.

You wondered, dearest L, the first time I wrote from hence, that I should think it worthy of mention, that I have been brought so far without any evil accident. Now we are more accustomed to consider all things in the light of that gracious word of God, which informs us, that “not a sparrow falleth to the ground without our heavenly Father’s notice.”*

By the good hand of our God upon us we arrived here safely after a very pleasant drive, neither of us suffering from fatigue or confinement, about three o’clock. We had, at intervals, a good deal of spiritual

* Matt. x. 29.

chat, and I wrote a good deal in the way of detached materials for my sermon. My companion seemed greatly gratified with her last visit to us. Indeed I trust, that as long as we and our Christian friends are spared to each other, and no material decline in the Divine life takes place in our souls, that we shall find every meeting more pleasant and profitable than the one which preceded it. For, in proportion as we "grow up in all things into Him, who is our Head," and are animated with more of the influence of His Spirit, we shall look on Christian communion as one of the means of grace and edification, and rejoice that it has pleased the Lord to make them, who are so dear to us according to the flesh, to be also the channels of conveying his grace to our souls. May we thus be ripening together for glory, and becoming more like to, and fit for, the blessed company in heaven !

And how is my dearest wife ? What a refuge for my thoughts to know that you are in the Lord's hands, and that "He that keepeth thee will not sleep !" Give me a line to say how you are, and what has been the course of your Sabbath meditation.

May the Lord be with you, dearest L., and give you a quiet and comfortable night, and prepare you to engage with satisfaction and advantage in the privileges and duties of the Lord's day !

Baxter's form of prayer and praise for the Lord's day, and his meditation at the close of the "Saint's Rest," mentioned the other day in Alleine, have much that is connected with every thing dear to a Christian's heart, especially on the Christian Sabbath.

Adieu, dear L.

Believe me, your affectionate.

N.

LETTER VII.

Bocking Hall, April, 21, 1820.

HITHER, my dear L., “by the good hand of my God upon me,” I am brought in peace and safety. I was indulged by Divine permission to exercise my thoughts a little upon John vi. 28, 29, respecting the spirit in which the Jews asked that question—“What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?” and the light which our Lord’s answer—“This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom he hath sent,”—throws on the nature of faith as the first work of God performed by the new-born soul, and the foundation of every other work; the first in order in the series of a life of new and devoted obedience. It is faith, which sets the heart at liberty to “run the way of God’s commandments,” clears the course before us, endues the soul with vigor and liberty through the atonement and resurrection of Jesus, proposes a hope full of immortality, and the constraining motive of redeeming love.

Dearest L., may the Lord endue you and me with grace to “apprehend that for which we are apprehended of Christ,” and above all things, not to rest in present attainments;—to “forget the things that are behind, and reach forth to the things that are before, and press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus!”

But how low are my aims, and how careless my endeavours: and how much have I forgotten “my first love!” When I use this phrase, I cannot say, that the early season of my impressions of Divine things was marked by that liberty and fervor in the devotion of

myself to God, and that enjoyment in his service which many experience, for I walked under much bondage. But then under all that continual operation of legality and slavish fear, the Lord gave me the desire to do all for him, not to spare myself, never to think a minute or a penny my own, never to be satisfied with what I was doing for God and for souls; so that there was the spirit of liberty and love, though shackled with the burden and chains of bondage. My state seemed to be like that of the true worshippers under the old dispensation. Even under all the burden and obscurity of the legal services, "my soul seemed athirst for God, even for the living God," and to mourn that my absence from him was prolonged. Now with more light and freedom of principles, and I hope more acquaintance with "the things that are freely given me of God," I seem insensible, (shall I say it?) to that question—"Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" A want of watchfulness, godly jealousy, heavenly-mindedness, and devoted activity is indulged. Above all, the grand work does not go on, the foundation of all the rest—believing in Jesus. I do not seem to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." My views are not more *distinct, abiding, extensive, operative*. And corresponding with this negligence in "stirring up the gift of God in me," is my indulgence of infirmity and corruption—indolence of mind and body—a hasty hard manner in all spiritual duties—giving way to appetite, though in an almost imperceptible degree, yet with an almost ceaseless perseverance.

Pray for me, dearest L., and for yourself; for I know that you have to fight with the same enemies, and are liable to the same dangers. But the battle is the Lord's, and the event is certain. Let us be humbled

--yea, may the Lord give us grace to be humbled ! (for the most elementary feeling of a gracious kind must come immediately from his own gracious hand.) And may he graciously "correct us, and not in anger," and may we arise in dependence on his help and loving-kindness, and put away all that is displeasing to him, and "run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, and after his example, and in his strength, *endure the cross, despising the shame* !

I have only time to add my dearest love to yourself, and most affectionate regards to all our dear friends.

Your N.

LETTER VIII.

C——h, April 10, 1821.

I came hither in a dull frame. But I think I found the truth of what I have frequently conjectured to be true, that our thoughts may be ascending towards the Lord, and he may in a corresponding manner be present with the mind, even when there is no actual forming of the reflections or desires of the soul into words. If the mind is in some measure watched, and not suffered to wander unchecked, it may be kept to the conclusion of the same train of subjects, (and those of the most important kind) even though no single proposition is framed by the mind, or expressed by the lips.

It will seldom indeed happen, that so total an absence of defined thought occurs even in our most musing seasons. Desires will form themselves into

ejaculations, and gratitude for mercies that press on the recollection, will find utterance in some expression of thanksgiving. But still I am persuaded, that, when this is in ever so small a degree the case, yet the mind may have communion with God; there may, for instance, be much feeling of concern for sin, the dishonour done to God by it, its disloyalty, its unkindness, its treachery, its rebellion, the hurt which it does to the souls, whom it does not eternally destroy, and the millions whom it does actually destroy, and the joy, (as you told your little pupils,) which it occasions in hell. There may on these grounds be much sorrowful feeling in the soul on reviewing the past, which is not formed into language, but which affects the mind with compunction; and it may be accompanied also with much virtual desire of a "new heart and a right spirit," with as much as is sometimes felt, when perhaps we are able to give more utterance to it, and to form our desires into distinct petitions and resolutions. And the mind may at the same time ascend to a throne of grace in earnest desires for pardon, restoration and establishment, though these are scarcely evidenced by any further formation of petition into words, than occasionally breathing its feelings towards the Lord. And such prayers may be with what I may call a corresponding answer. The soul may be strengthened by a general consideration of the Lord's faithfulness; though no particular scriptural declaration respecting it may occur to the memory. I may be soothed and supported with the remembrance, that "all the promises are yea and amen in Christ Jesus, to the glory of God by us," though no particular promise is fixed as a distinct subject of contemplation, or object of confidence. And thus when the head is too much clouded and perplexed to be occupied in

contemplation, the heart may feel and go on for a considerable time (when outward circumstances do not occur to interrupt these musings) to exercise conscious satisfaction in having “the Lord for our portion,” and in the thought that “there is forgiveness in him.”

These were nearly the thoughts that occurred to me while I was at breakfast at C., after I had finished my morning walk. The coach containing my box and cloak, arrived soon after I had finished the other side, and transferred my attention to Psalm lxii. which was well connected with the train of thought, in which I had been engaged. But I was unable to keep to any one subject, and my mind continued to fluctuate from one to another all the way to C. And yet I am thankful to say, I was still kept within the range of spiritual subjects, and these of a supporting and encouraging kind. And many petitions and ejaculations of thanksgiving evidenced, I hope, that the Lord both incited me to ask him, and was willing to be found of me. I entreated He would be gracious to your soul and mine.

It is now about eight o'clock. You are just about to assemble the family. May the Lord be with you, and by His Spirit “open your understandings, that you may understand the Scriptures,” and may “your hearts burn within you,” while He is pleased to bless you with His presence! May His Providence guard us through the night, and our strength be renewed by His blessing on the refreshment of sleep, and our souls disposed by His grace to live closer to Him to-morrow—if to-morrow be given—than ever we have done yet!

I am—dearest creature—
affectionately yours,

N.

LETTER IX.

I—c, April 11, 1821.

Here, my dearest L. I took my leave last night ; and hither through the Divine mercy I am returned.

I desire to be thankful, that, though from home, and moving from place to place with some rapidity, my mind has been kept in something more of tranquillity, I hope, than used to be the case, and less disturbed by the objects around me. My mind was occupied during my morning's walk, (though with much wandering and interruption) in an endeavour to turn my attention to the great realities of eternity, and even after I got into the coach, I was enabled several times to return to the train of thought, in which I had been previously engaged. When I got to London, it was otherwise—I was no longer master of my reflections ; yet I saw much that tended to confirm me in the conviction, that the world's portion is a poor portion, and that in choosing the Lord for ours, we have chosen right. May we know in some feeble measure, how to value, improve, and enjoy our choice ! All we want is to understand that Scripture—"Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart."* The world have indeed chosen wrong, because comparatively their choice is worth nothing. But then, if it were not, that there is something infinitely better, they would have a good deal to say for themselves ; and, not knowing what that superior good is, they have found all that can be said for the meaner things which they possess, and are ingenious in pointing out their claims to notice, and their sources of gratification.

* Ps. xxxvii. 4.

How poorly do we avail ourselves of the superior grounds we possess for vindicating the alternative we have chosen, and improving the opportunity it affords!

But I must commend you to the merciful and safe keeping of our covenant God. May He watch over us and keep us now and for evermore!

Your affectionate

N.

LETTER X.

Bocking Hall, Dec. 24, 1822.

Now, dearest L. knowing that this last day of my stay here will be a busy day; I take my pen immediately after breakfast, and before I begin business, that I may tell you what I wish for my soul, and your soul, and may beg you to entreat the face of the Lord for me, and with me, that He would be with me, and with us both, and make this, (notwithstanding all threatening hindrances and interruptions,) a day, on which we may wait on Him, and have our eye upon Him in all we do, and may be enabled, in spite of the demands of worldly business, to redeem some time especially for His service. Oh! may we always retain a sense of His presence, be steadily contemplating, and frequently revolving, His covenant love in Jesus, and all the blessings in time and eternity, which it *implies, includes, and secures*, that we may endeavour to put forth the hand of faith to lay fast hold on these blessings as our own—in dependence upon that promise—“Thou SHALT call me—‘My Father,’ and shalt not turn away from me.”* In this spirit we shall not

* Jer. iii. 19.

easily suffer ourselves to be put aside by the suggestions of the enemy, nor be chilled and discouraged by the unbelief and corrupt feelings of our own hearts. Still shall we say to ourselves—‘ Though all this and ten times more be the case, “ yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure ; and, as this is all my salvation, so it is all my desire ; ” * though I have attained to little clear, and abiding and satisfying apprehension of it, yet it is my desire, it is that which I want, and feel the want of when I have any thing else, and it is that, which I feel my most fearful and grievous want, when I am disquieted about any thing else. And though “ I have not attained, I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. ” †

And here is my trust and my consolation, amid all my difficulties. He has kindled that faint spark of desire that is in my soul. And He who hath “ drawn me with loving-kindness,” in tokens of having “ loved me with an everlasting love ” ‡—He who hath kept this spark alive, so that “ *many floods* have not quenched it,” will perform this work unto the day of His coming. “ He does not despise the day of small things,” “ nor break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.” Therefore, my soul ! hope against hope. “ Take with you words, and turn to the Lord, and say, Take away all iniquity, and receive me graciously ; heal my backslidings, and love me freely. O let thine anger be turned away from me.” || Thus His people seek Him, and the renewal of His favour, or rather a renewed sense of it, (for His favour in Christ Jesus is always the *same*, and *changes* not :) and thus it is His will, that they should seek it, for he

* 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

‡ Jer. xxxi. 3.

† Phil. iii. 12.

§ Hos. xiv. 2—4.

saith even to the aggravated backsliding Israel—"If thou wilt return, return unto me."*

My purpose is, first to get my sermon, or—if possible—sermons, for to-morrow, into a competent degree of arrangement in a short compass, that I may easily turn my thoughts to them afterwards in the course of the day, when I have a few minutes to pursue a previous train of thought, but not to devise a new one. Secondly, I must endeavour to dispatch all remaining business, which I have a tolerable hope I may be able to do. Thirdly, I purpose to go and see a few of the neighbours before dinner, when business is tolerably finished. After dinner I may perhaps call on ——, and then I shall have the evening principally for the continuance and conclusion of my sermons. Now may the Lord prosper this plan so far as it is the dictate of His will, and tends to the promotion of His glory! and may He alter it wherever it is not so, and shew me what is my path, and teach and "make me to go on it, for therein is my desire!" And may He bless me with His presence, and support and enable me to "look, not at the things which are seen, and are temporal, but at the things which are not seen and eternal." And may he grant the same to my dear wife this day, and every day, for His dear Son's sake, Jesus Christ, our Lord! The Lord bless you!

Yours,

N.

* Jer. iv. 1.

LETTER XI.

Bocking Hall, Dec. 20, 1825.

DEAREST L.

I bless the Lord who inclined your heart to listen to me fifteen years ago last August, or rather last June, (the August accomplished my request) and who has yet spared you to accompany me on my pilgrimage, and alleviate the wounds, which my imprudence is continually encountering from the thorns of the wilderness through which our road lies. And though I look on myself as the person obliged both then and ever since; yet I have a comfort in the reflection (without which all other comforts would be meagre indeed) that you have not been encountering pure self-denial, while providing for my happiness, and ministering to it so continually; but that the Lord has given you also some satisfaction and comfort in the place and relation, in which his Providence has appointed your lot. The thought of your kindness, next to his own, has been the grand subject of consolation to me, since I left you, amidst a continual worry of imaginations, arising from, I believe, the effect of confusion in my head. My strength is quite as good. I think, as at any time, and my countenance, when I had occasion to ascertain whether my drive had discomposed my cravat, appeared clear and healthy rather above the average. But my mind from the images, of which I cannot keep it clear, has been in one frame of perplexed musing and muttering ever since I set out. The day continues beautiful, and nothing could be more propitious than my journey has been. And I hope now I am amused, and have busi-

ness to occupy me, that my thick-coming fancies will be dispersed.

I must now get about my different business here, and commend you to our infinitely merciful, compassionate, long-suffering, and faithful God and Saviour; and entreating your prayers,

I am your affectionate and obliged,
N.

LETTER XII.

Stratford, August 26, 1823.

DEAREST L.

I have been thinking, as I came along, of the signs of the times, and how they agree with what we may expect will precede and accompany the millennial times. We are apt to expect something, not only marvellous in power, but strange in appearance; something which, if not different from natural and common objects, (as the "cloven tongues, and the rushing mighty wind") will yet attract a considerable degree of notice. I do not say this will not be the case: but I think I may say, that there is quite room for a display of spiritual power and energy in the church, entirely distinct from anything at all strange in its kind or nature.

If the Lord should pour out His Spirit to bear testimony to His Son in the hearts of sinners and believers, we should see a change from that indifference, with which sinners hear our invitation. They would see the Saviour clearly set forth with the eyes

* Acts ii. 2, 3.

of common sense, and be supernaturally set free from the confinement of prejudice, evil dispositions, and love of sin. And they would no longer "love darkness rather than light," any more than the natural man loves to live in a dungeon rather than a house. They would "receive Christ Jesus the Lord," and become the sons of God by believing, and having "received Christ, they would walk in Him."

And equally great would the change be in believers; and yet it would not *necessarily* (though it might) include anything astonishing to the eyes, ears, and imagination.

What a wonder it would be to see hundreds or thousands of our unenlightened people at a time, simply from their being come to themselves, crying out, "What must I do to be saved?"—And by the exercise of spiritual common sense, clearly convinced in a moment, that the answer to this question is all they want to know, in order to make them completely happy! They would then no longer occupy themselves in buying, selling, planting and building, no more than a man, who was attempting to escape out of a house on fire.

So with believers. The sense of the inestimable treasure which they have in their hands, would greatly open their minds to the sin and folly they have been guilty of, in not "counting all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord." How is it, that we are not ready to "suffer the loss of all things" as occasion calls for it, that we may secure communion with Him, or confess His name before men, or accomplish His work? That I endeavour to do something for the Lord, I believe, may be admitted. But how much is it like engaging in the service of a Master to whom one is not, rather than to whom one is, attached! How little time, and how

little heart, in labouring for souls—my own or others ! and how much are both time and heart occupied in what has no more importance than children's play !

But, were the Spirit poured out on us both, without any other change than a supernatural, sanctified influence upon common sense, or what the Scriptures call “ eyes to see, and ears to hear, and a heart to understand ; ” we should make Him, His honour, His salvation, His work, the very end for which we live, and should find our delight in it.

Pray—dearest—that it may be thus with us. I shall be happy to be back again ; but, except *you*, I *want* for nothing, and feel stronger, I think, than I have done for some time.

Your affectionate

N.

LETTER XIII.

Bocking Hall, August 27, 1828.

MY DEAREST L.

I shall now endeavour, the Lord willing, to pursue the train of thought I entered upon yesterday, respecting the effects of an outpouring of the Divine Spirit.

When that takes place, every family to which it extends, will be a church, every conversation an ordinance—an opportunity for maintaining communion with God through the beloved Redeemer, and with each other at the same time. Ps. cxlv. will be a specimen of the general communication, that will take place at every meal, and every time that Christians meet one another ; “ every day they will bless their

God, and King, and praise his name for ever and ever." "One generation" will transmit the delightful subject "to another." And when "they will speak of the glory of the Divine kingdom, and talk of His power;" oh! how they will each be delighted, and delight one another, in talking over their own privileges, as subjects of the kingdom of righteousness and peace! and how they will extol him, who rules that kingdom! When the Spirit manifests the Divine beauties of the Redeemer, how will their tongues overflow with thanksgiving and praise. "as the same Spirit gives them utterance!" And then this will be the case always, and under all circumstances. The world will be seen in its true light, and valued no more than at its just value. Like other childish things, it will not be allowed to intrude into the place of important considerations and interests; and like insipid pleasures, there will be no temptation to turn to it, from more elevated and refreshing gratifications.

What a lustre will this cast upon every relation in life! What a meaning will it discover in the expressions of Scripture—"Husbands! love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church."* Surely, dearest L., the Lord has made us to love each other. But what do we know of a love that has any resemblance to his? And the low state of spiritual influence and feeling among us makes a husband, who enters into the idea of such a refined Christian affection, almost as rare in the present day as a prophet, or an interpreter of tongues. Oh! that the Lord would excite our minds to realize greater spirituality in our views, expectations, desires, and prayers, both for ourselves and each other. Oh! that our tongues were

* Eph. v. 25.

loosed, that we might speak of the Redeemer, and our hearts set at liberty from the world, to love Him, and exult in Him ! But tongue and heart seem tied at present. When shall they be set at liberty, that, lying down, and rising up, sitting in the house, and walking by the way, we might delight ourselves in the Lord our God, and “ abundantly utter the memory of His great goodness ? ”

“ Pray without ceasing,” and expect great things.

Dearest L.

Your affectionate,

N.

LETTER XIV.

Bocking Hall, June 20, 1829.

My drive hither, dearest L. has, through the Lord's mercy, been a very pleasant one. The weather, as I suppose you have had it at Ipswich, is remarkably serene and pleasant : and so far very congenial and comfortable to me. Yet I seem to have been more asleep than awake all the time, in a sort of stupor in my head, which made me feel like a person dreaming.

The Lord quicken and awaken us both, dear L ! I trust He has given us the “ life that is hid with Christ in God,” and “ reconciled us to Himself, not imputing our trespasses unto us.” But oh ! that he would more sensibly stir up the power, and draw forth the faculties, of that life in us, that we may “ not live, but Christ may live in us, and the life we now live in the flesh, we may live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave Himself for us.” I am sure we

need constantly to “look unto Jesus,” and to have “our conversation in heaven,” that we may be awake and watching. A habit of turning to a morsel of the word many times in a day, and of ejaculatory prayer, probably would very much tend to help this, under the Lord’s blessing.

Believe me, dearest L.

Your affectionate,
N.

LETTER XV.

Bocking Hall, July 13, 1850.

May the Lord bless my dearest wife, and lift up the light of His countenance upon her this morning! You were in my thoughts as soon almost as I opened my eyes, and I was mercifully preserved from that multitude of wandering imaginations, which usually harass my mind at first waking. May the Lord accept the precious atonement made at Calvary, for all the sins of this day, and guide and govern us as His redeemed and “peculiar people, zealous of good works,” finding His presence always accompanying us, and His service our delight! We must not expect to accomplish great things, but we must pray for great things, aim at all we can, and expect that great things will on the whole be the result, though we are not permitted to see them—“that pride may be hid from our eyes,” which might be excited, if we could see, that we were made instruments in any important work.

It seems the Lord’s especial intention to pursue this plan with me. I seem, if I know any thing of my

own heart, to have no other desire than to serve the Lord. I would give myself and all that I am, and have, and can influence, entirely and evidently to His service. But all that I do, seems to be accompanied by a sensation, which is the most humiliating perhaps of all our feelings—*awkwardness*. Whatever I attempt to engage in, this cleaves to me ; but this alone perhaps could so effectually lay pride in the dust and cripple and confound it, though as long as I breathe, nothing will ever extirpate it.

Our friends here enquired most kindly after you.

Your affectionate,
N.

LETTER XVI.

Bocking Hall, July 14, 1830.

MY DEAR L.

Your welcome letter reached me rather later than the usual time at which the post arrives ; and when I was almost beginning to fear, that something might have prevented you from writing. I will not say, I was alarmed, or tempted to complain ; for how can I complain or fear, when I believe what Jesus is in Himself, and when I remember what He hath ever been in His dealings with us, since He first brought us together ? I bless Him for His mercy in preserving both you and myself, in our usual degree of health and ability for daily movement.

Entreating the Lord's blessing on your communications with the sick, I wish you to endeavour to lay before Mrs. —, something in the way of the follow-

ing observations. But in what way, and at what time, and what proportions, you must judge.

‘ Mr. Nottidge told me, Mrs. —, that he had some little conversation with you on Christian experience ; and in writing to me he has wished you to consider what he then said.’

‘ Christian experience grows by the uses of gospel knowledge ; just as the experience of a merchant, or an officer in the army, grows by the use of mercantile knowledge, or military knowledge, in practically using that knowledge in their several pursuits. But the merchant does not acquire military experience, and the military man does not acquire mercantile experience. And this may explain to you, how a man may be a person of great experience and knowledge in other things, and yet may have much to learn as respects the love of God, and the nature of faith. Those, who are much in advanced age, and whom we respect greatly, may have much that must be learned in the gospel, and which must be received with the humility and teachableness of a little child.

‘ Do but come in this frame and spirit to the feet of the Lord Jesus ; and you shall find something in the love of God, and in faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, as new, as unexperienced before, and as delightful, as to a wife who was never yet a mother, is the birth of her first-born. You will find yourself occupied by an object, influenced by a feeling, and placed in a relation, as entirely unknown to you before as such a person ? ’

You must mould my statement into your own expressions, and manage as on consideration you see best.

The Lord be with us !

Your affectionate,

N.

LETTER XVII.

Bocking Hall, June 30, 1831.

DEAREST L.

I feel it quite an indulgence to sit down to write to you ; and yet I seem to want to speak, when I have nothing to say. Or rather, I might have said, I have nothing ready to say. I have plenty to say, with which my heart seems at times to be even straitened, and distended, so as not to know how to restrain it. But my own experience baffles me as to any shape, in which I may put those subjects for your consideration, which I seem to manage so unprofitably for myself. Your letter is this minute arrived. I bless the Lord for your comfortable intelligence, that you are enabled to go on, but I may still sympathize, as I am well qualified to do, with your feeling of confusion. Of wandering speculation I have more than enough. This it is which discourages me often from bringing forward those unspeakably important truths, which I groan to see more experimentally felt, and more practically exemplified, both by you and myself. I feel earnest that we should, as those who "dwell together as heirs of everlasting life," be "girding up each other's loins," and looking with "sobriety and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ." And though I hope this is the one thing, upon which our hearts are by the Holy Spirit's teaching fixed, I find that the occurrences of each day, as it arrives, seem to keep this grand object at a little distance from the present consideration, and sensible conscious grasp of the mind.

What is it, which (instrumentally at least) keeps us

from an habitual "conversation in heaven?" "The things which are seen and are temporal," are near to us, interesting to our natural feelings, pressing to be attended to, and dispatched from a seeming urgency, which they carry with them ; and being also endless in number and variety, and in the different forms of plausibility, with which they plead for notice, eternity is so dimly seen, or for so short a space, that its real importance has no abiding place in the mind. Now if this were unavoidable, and the cure of it impracticable. it would be no sin ; for God cannot require impossibilities of us. But a death-bed has convinced every man, who has died in his senses, that the duties he neglected were only difficult, and not impossible. This clear view of the truth of the matter brings back all the guilt, which, from taking a confused view of the subject all his life, he had kept from being painfully felt. What we want then, at present, are those clear views which we shall have then. For example.

1. A clear view of the real, incomparable importance of heaven, hell, death, judgment, an interest in Christ, and a well-founded hope of the favor of God. We want to see it in all its important features ; just as we see the importance of instant endeavouring to escape, and of providing the means of escape, when in a house actually on fire. Besides, our view should not only be *clear* as respects the object we are looking at in itself, but *distinct* from the interruption that arises from mixing it with other objects. When the house is on fire, we not only see clearly the importance of instantly securing the preservation of life : but nothing else affects the mind at the same time. All else is put aside, or comes but feebly, and for a moment across the imagination. Just so it is with eternity, as compared with the thoughts we have of it

when in health. In health, it is seen dimly and seldom; the objects of time closely and continually. When death approaches, these are banished, and eternity comes near, and is seen distinctly and forcibly. How then is this delusion in the season of health to be counteracted? By labouring and praying to be enabled one by one to dismiss these inferior and impertinent subjects of thought, and to place the "one thing needful" distinctly and determinately before the mind. Now we know that, however difficult it is to do this, yet we are able to do it. There is scarcely a day, in some part of which we have not some serious thoughts of death and eternity, particularly in the early part of the morning, when endeavouring to draw near to God in prayer. But afterwards other things are permitted to engross the thoughts, and we lose the effect produced upon the judgment by our morning meditations. But difficult as it is, this transition may be counteracted. The sleepy mind may be kept awake; the indolent mind may be roused to activity, the desultory, wandering mind may be urged to perseverance. And the effort and process by which it is to be accomplished, is—First, by continually spurring the mind with the importance of the subject, and the necessity arising from thence, of dispatching what we are about, as connected with that importance. We say to ourselves—'This letter, this conversation must be engaged in, must be pursued, must be brought to a conclusion, whatever else is postponed, or neglected;' and so it is at length finished. Secondly, by applying this feeling of importance to every single sentence of the letter, or the conversation. If I give way to an inaccurate expression in this sentence, I may do the same in the next, and in the third, and my letter, though it be finished as to its outward shape, and

general frame, will be wholly useless as to the attainment of the end in view, as if it had never been written. So I may go through the general performance of the engagements, and duties of a Christian, or a Ministerial day. But if distinctness, precision, simplicity, and faithfulness be not continually attended to, I may possibly do nothing throughout the day with effect.

As then we would reject a word, that would encumber the clearness of a sentence, or that would not forward the expression of our meaning, or the object of our letter, so let us drop every thought, word, and action, to which we might unawares be tempted in the course of the day, and which would hinder, or not help, the great end we have in view. Throw aside the newspaper, when not necessary for information or recreation. Crowd up worldly business into as small a compass as possible. Endeavour to simplify the manner of dispatching it, and to fix your whole attention upon it, while it requires attention, that it may occupy the less time while it is doing, and not require to be so soon attended to again, as when less heedfully performed. Our dear Lord looks on us at these seasons, when we are occupied with needless interruptions, or with avocations pursued beyond the needful time, as a mother looks upon her infant on the edge of a precipice, or with a knife in his hand. Let us endeavour to relieve his kind and loving heart, by dropping the mischievous weapon, or retiring from the spot of danger. To aim at this continually, in a spirit of faith and prayer, cannot fail, in process of time, to produce a decided, and sensible effect. Then let us exert the same continual endeavour to improve in the mode of dispatching the Lord's errands. Having made room for them, let us improve the opportunity by

doing them in the very best way we can. Improvement will be slow ; but, perseveringly pursued, it will, under the divine blessing, be attained. And when once our time and attention are occupied in those things which are really important duties, many advantages are gained, which were not at first thought of. Important things, once become habitual, are in many respects the easiest, and occupy the least time. There is no uncertainty about them. The path is plain, straight forward, with no intricate windings. Again,—when we are but *attempting* to do all we can for the Lord, there is great comfort, whether we succeed to the extent of our wishes or not ; for it is the desire and the endeavour that he looks at, and not the amount of what we accomplish. Endeavour also, while engaged in the Lord's work, to keep constantly in mind—‘ This is my real happiness, as well as my duty, this is the only way in which I can secure happiness, in time, and in eternity.’ And in conclusion, when you cannot be engaged in a right action, try to be in a right place or posture. When we cannot be employed, let us endeavour to look at the records of past experience, to search the Scriptures, or read some good books, such as Rutherford or Owen ; that, when the mind is too indistinct *even to think*, we may keep the attention in the atmosphere of spiritual things, and be delivered from the incessant wandering or stagnation that would otherwise take place. But I must conclude. My letter has occupied most of this morning. May the Lord bless what has been attempted for his glory, and with the desire of ministering to our mutual benefit !

Dearest L. your ever affectionate

N.

LETTER XVIII.

Bocking Hall, June 27, 1832.

MY DEAR L.

Your second dispatch has just reached me. "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name!" Not only I have personally enjoyed His incessant and almighty protection, the fruit of his covenant love, in this journey, but those who are dear and whom I left behind, are also preserved in peace and safety. Not only "He keepeth my bones, so that not one of them is broken, but no plague cometh nigh my dwelling."*

I really feel benefitted, I hope materially, by my excursion. And though I am separated from all the cream of my earthly comforts, I find that the change of air and occupation is so refreshing, and the necessity for it, arising from my late ill state of health, so strong, that I could not allowably deprive myself of the promise of further probable advantage from the extension of my excursion.

I get a little opportunity for spiritual examination in my morning's walk, before breakfast, and again I hoped I should have retained some savour of it for my letter. But I am again stupid, and confused. But I remember the subject of my thoughts was Psalm xxiii. and what materials of delight and refreshing, of healing and repose does it afford! "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." There needs nothing but opportunities of darting up these petitions to the Lord, which in the ordinary dispensation of His

* Psalm xxxiv. 20 : xci. 10.

Spirit this relation cannot fail to suggest, in order to our receiving a consolation, which the world can neither give nor take away.

Neither is it necessary, in order to receive comfort from this thought, that our minds should be in their completest vigour of exertion, or even faith in its distinctest perceptions, or its most active exercise. It is the decision between the suggestions of faith and unbelief, and the determined adoption of faith's suggestions, that instrumentally brings peace to the mind, though its perception of particulars at the time, may be neither vivid nor distinct. The grand point is, to be persuaded at such a moment ;—‘ Here, knocking at this door, or even lying before it, and looking towards it, I am safe, and must one day be happy ; and any where else, I am sure to be at present uncomfortable. and continuing there—to be eternally wretched.’ And then the next thing is desire. This is the pulse of spiritual life. What way is desire looking and breathing ? Would it not be heaven immediately, i. e. to be in the presence of the Saviour ? and, as dear ——— said, to be always doing the will of God, or, if that may not be had, to have as much of the one and the other, as can be enjoyed by faith in the present state. I know we often (and perhaps mostly) feel as if we did not even wish this. But what is the fact ? Do we not wish to feel otherwise ? Is it not like the fainting state of the invalid, who can enjoy neither food nor bed, nor any common comfort, till he feels almost indifferent about caring to be otherwise ? But if you could certainly assure him, that he would be restored to all his former powers and capacities in an instant, is there any doubt, whether his interest and ardor would not revive at the same moment ? Sin is not only the sickness of the regenerate soul, but so great

a sickness, that it seems to cause an utter indifference about health. But the great danger of this is, when the enemy persuades us for a time, that that indifference is real. Let us struggle then to cast up our languid eyes, and send up our stifled wishes and cries, to Him from whom cometh our help.

My love in Christ Jesus be with you. "Yet a little while," and we shall be with all the redeemed, in perfect enjoyment of His blessed presence, "and go out no more."

Your more and more attached and obliged,
N.

LETTER XIX.

Bocking Hall. December 19, 1833.

Well, here I am, dearest L., by the mercy of God, our gracious Lord and Father, safe and well; and am enabled, though slowly, and at the expence of much more time than it would cost any other man in health, to go on with one demand on my attention after another, with the hope of competently accomplishing what I have to do before I leave Bocking. I do not get on with the alertness that many do; nor as I should wish to do; and this I believe is your experience and mine in most of what we undertake. And when we are employed for the Lord, as I hope we are, in some degree at least, whatever we may be engaged in, it is rather discouraging to find, that we proceed with such feeble and perplexed steps. Yet perhaps this is not without its decided advantage. While we are, I hope, not idle, and are honoured by being permitted to do

something for His glory, we are taught at the same time how little we can do ; and this hides pride and self-complacency from our eyes ; and we are taught also how little can be done for the Lord in such a world as this, and so are prepared more and more to see the desirableness of that state, where we shall serve Him perfectly without the temptations, by which we are here endangered ; and without the hindrances, which here reduce our best services to a result, that amounts to almost nothing. Oh ! what will it be to have done with the cares, perplexities, entanglements, disappointed expectations, and paralyzed efforts that encumber every thing here, that detain our thoughts from meditating, and our eyes from fixing on unseen and eternal joys ; and yet occupy us in inferior things to so little purpose ! Methinks if one could but view it steadily, and estimate it accurately, that even a death-bed would, beside its bringing nearer to heaven, bring us also to an experience of some anticipation of its blessedness, by the mere consideration, that I am now dismissed from labouring with so little profit, even in the Lord's service, and from being exposed to so much in my endeavours to serve Him ; while, with all this exposure, I can effect so little for Him, who lived, and died, and rose, and reigns for me, and for my eternal blessedness.

Well, I hope the Lord has been with you and your party to-day, and that you have been able to get through what you and I generally find rather formidable, and that by the Lord's kindness some word may have been spoken to His glory. I hope (and it is the only thing that can make the thought of staying longer on earth in any way, or in any sense desirable) that I am sometimes, at least, enabled to direct a conversation with rather less effort than formerly to those things,

which alone can give a reflecting mind any feeling of satisfaction, any glow of pleasure.

I think also that with reference to my present companions there is more desire than there was, more interest, more of the enquiry of desire, and of want, and less of the suggestion of curiosity and objection. Our breakfast this morning was on the whole a pleasant opportunity, and considerable part of it employed in remarks suggested by Bogatsky's reflections on Esther's petition to Ahasuerus.

I know not what I shall have for next Sabbath. But I know the Lord will provide. However, you will admit that this is a ground for my taking leave, "and commending you to the Lord and to the word of His grace, who is able to build us up, and give us an inheritance among them that are sanctified through faith in Him." *

Remember to deal with me very closely about caution in eating. I have eaten well since I have been here, but sparingly, and the difference in comfort, activity and spirits is wonderful.

Do endeavour not to let me sacrifice the blessed privilege of communion with the Lord, and comparative delight in His work and dealings, "for a morsel of meat." The Lord be your constant and eternal refuge and comfort! Remember me affectionately to all the dear Christian friends you see.

Your N.

* Acts xx. 52.

LETTER XX.

ON A VISIT TO THE REV. CHARLES SIMEON.

King's College, May 13, 1834.

DEAREST L.

Here I am in our dear friend's rooms, and I am rather glad to write my letter here, that I may spare him from talking more than is necessary. The day is damp, and its influence is as usual, and I know not how to make my pen move. But I have to record the Lord's mercies every step of the way. Though my thoughts have been *wandering*, I hope my reliance has not been *wavering*, and I have been enabled within the enclosure of the carriage, like Diogenes in his tub, to meditate and look upward, and look into the word, and catch a little help from one thing and the other, as the Lord in his tender mercy and inexhaustible grace was pleased to bring them before me, and employ them as means in his all-sufficient hands. Look up, dearest L., look to the unchanging and unchangeable covenant. He "hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."* May that grace be ever with you. Dear Mr. Simeon unites in love with

Your affectionate

N.

* 2 Tim. i. 9.

LETTER XXI.

ON THE DEATH OF AN ENDEARED RELATIVE—A TRUE
“MOTHER IN ISRAEL.”

Bocking Hall, June 10, 1834.

Well! it is now near eight o'clock, and having already been with you, and for you, though in a most feeble and interrupted way, at the throne of grace, I shall endeavour to catch a few minutes for conversation with you on paper before our breakfast-time. When I had closed my letter to you at C. it was soon time to go to the meeting; * we had a pleasant and, if it was not our own fault, a profitable occasion. The observations of the speakers were always sensible, often pious, and calculated on the whole to make a good and useful impression. I rather wished to be on the reserve in introducing any reference to our dear sister's experience into my remarks at these meetings. But I found, that when I was talking about the Bible, and the hopes to be derived from the Bible, and the benefit arising from diligently searching it, I could think of nothing so appropriate as the testimony to the reality of these hopes, and to the substantial nature of that benefit, which may be drawn from the experience of her life and death. I stated the principal facts to them, as a narrative of what had recently happened, of course without names, and without mentioning myself in the first person, but only referring to what was witnessed by the Minister present. And, on further recollection, I cannot see that I have done wrong, or that indeed I could have done better, except

* A Bible Meeting.

that, if I had been a more correct speaker, I might have secured more of the attention of my hearers, and might have delivered what I had to say more to their profit. In fact, I appear to myself to have been endeavouring to tread in the steps of my Redeemer, and following his suggestions, when with reference to the discharge of His ministerial office, He said—"I will declare Thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee." * May we praise Him, for He has been exceeding gracious to us, in "shewing us the path of life" through the gate of death; the reality, and the power of the hope of the gospel in the case of one of his people, who, though distinguished from the generality by some very decided and peculiar talents, and diligent in the use of means, was not so preeminently exempt from infirmity, or favoured with such wonderful supports of grace in her ordinary path of life, or brought to such a surprising degree of progress in gracious attainments, as to leave us in any reasonable doubt, whether we too may not "be followers of one, who through faith and patience now inherits the promises;" or whether, if we "give diligence to the full assurance of hope," we too may not in all substantial respects depend upon the same support at the last. For let us further take notice, that, in looking at her life and death, we are looking at the Redeemer's faithfulness to His word, and His all-sufficiency to fulfil it. Her experience is only the surface, the outward and visible sign of a life, an imperishable principle of "life, which is hid with Christ in God." Her usefulness, her amiableness, her cheerfulness, her religious habits and exercises were only the flowers that grow on the banks, and are sup-

* Psalm xxii. 22.

ported by the unfailing streams of "that river of water of life, which maketh glad the whole city of God;" and of which you and I are by faith partakers as well as she.

And here your dear letter arrives just in time; just in that part of my letter where it should be noticed. If unbelief be yielded to now, when shall we hope to be free from its bondage? We "have seen, we have heard, our hands have handled, the word of life." In her dying confidence of rejoicing, "the life was manifested," the power and fulfilment of that promise—"Because I live, ye shall live also."* And the copy of that experience—"not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."† In short, "that eternal life, which was with the Father," and which was laid up in Christ for the inexhaustible supply of His people, was then manifested to us. If we doubt this, we must, I think, say, there is no arriving at any rational conviction upon the subject. And if we do not doubt, on comparing what the scriptures say with what we have seen; then the resulting conviction must be the highest possible. It cannot be reasonable to remain in anything like fluctuation—that is, I mean—fluctuation of mind; fluctuation of feeling and impression there will always be, while the flesh is the flesh, and while the spirit has to conflict with it. For though the evidence would have been of a different kind, had I heard Him say, "Tabitha! arise," or, "Lazarus! come forth," and had seen the event follow the words, I could not have been more irresistibly, more soberly led to say—This is the finger of God,—or have had a more powerful, though it

* John xiv. 19.

† Gal. ii. 0.

would have been a more sensible confirmation put on the words,—“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life,” * or more powerful strength given to that exhortation,—“Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” † And to this agrees my Lord’s declaration—“If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.” ‡ So I may say, if I take the book of God in my hand, which describes the power of faith to support feeble nature ; and if I see in any actual living instance the very things produced, which Scripture attributes to faith, as the faculty, by which we receive and experience the Divine power of the Saviour in the soul ; and if, seeing this, I still remain unbelieving, I do not see how the resurrection of a dead person could convince me. It might strike and astound the feelings more for the time ; but I think it highly questionable, whether it would produce more satisfactory or lasting conviction. Let us then “not stagger at the promises of God through unbelief, but be strong in faith, giving glory to God ; fully persuaded that what he hath promised He is able to perform.” ||

With my dearest love, believe me,
affectionately yours,
N.

* John iii. 36.

‡ Luke xvi. 31.

† 1 Cor. xv. 58.

|| Rom. iv. 20, 21.

LETTER XXII.

Bocking Hull, June 13, 1834.

I have already regretted to you, that I did not write the day before yesterday, and it was a sensible regret to me, because I knew, and felt by experience, how much satisfaction I derived from the hope, and still more from the actual pleasure, of receiving a few lines from you every morning. It really appears to me, that the Lord's prayer, kept continually before the mind, would be just the materials for every exercise of mind, that one would desire to be the habitual frame of one's spirit. For instance—Do I want any thing for myself, or others? for those, who are, or those who shall hereafter be, members of the mystical body of our Lord Jesus Christ? Yes—no doubt. We are all needy sinners, wanting pardon, and every other grace and blessing, every moment of our lives. Well! what is the first thought, the important thought, the all-satisfying thought, that we would wish in regard to such a view of ourselves and others, to have before the mind? What can it be, but—“Our Father? our Father, which art in heaven!”—An Almighty being, who is as good as he is Almighty; as infinite in kindness, and tenderness, and grace, as he is in power?—Moreover, one who is “our Father,” equally related to all, who seek, or whoever shall seek him. This is a double encouragement to pray to him; first—because of his Fatherly disposition to promote the happiness of his children; and then because the same parental disposition leads him to listen with delight to their prayers. He, it is said, “is more ready to hear, than we to pray;” nay more than this—all our disposition to pray, all our endea-

your to pray, all our actual prayers, are from him. "We know not what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit helpeth our infirmities,"—actually excites in us "groanings that cannot be uttered."* What an encouragement is this, to turn every thought, every feeling into prayer, and to be crying without ceasing, even when we have neither time, nor mind, nor recollection for more—"Our Father, which art in heaven!" A sigh, a look—accompanied with calling upon him by this tender relation, and laying claim to the reality of it, and all the benefits of it, by exercising faith in Christ Jesus, and coming to God the Father by him, can never be misunderstood or neglected by him. This is what he is looking, waiting, listening for. For it is written—"Thou wilt prepare their heart; thou wilt cause thine ear to hear."† Now then let us look up to the Lord in the spirit of this petition continually.

Your affectionate,
N.

LETTER XXIII.

2 o'clock, Romford, September 12, 1834.

MY DEAR L.

I have not often travelled in a denser cloud, or found my consciousness of being and action more interrupted; and my feelings more unpacked, and unfit for travelling than this morning. All shakes about, without getting into any quiet order to this moment,

* Rom. viii. 26.

† Psalm x. 17.

and I seem inclined to stare about, and ask whether I am awake, or not. My feelings in the morning seem to have corresponded in some measure to my subsequent experience. I find this passage in the course of a train of thought, hastily written down in my note-book this morning—“ Lord ! have compassion upon us, and keep us, yea, instruct us with thy strong hand, that we may not depart from thee. Alas, Lord ! when I am withdrawn from this peaceful room, and exposed to the interruptions and distractions of the world, how will my thoughts, which even now are scarcely restrained, be drawn aside, and confused, both in themselves and in the various materials, which outward things present to me ! Take us, (in our present condition and circumstances, of parting for a time,) into thy especial consideration, and leave us not in any respect to be governed by our own wills. Particularly we entreat thy favour in this matter now before us, that we may not go wrong, nor be hurried into any step, which may give occasion for regret.’

I think if I had reflected that on this side London my letter will be two days in travelling to you, I should have dropped a line there. I was pleasing myself with the idea that when I reached Ingatstone, I should be able at or after dinner to read our chapters, and that this might prepare for an evening somewhat of a spiritual character. And I will not even yet give up the hope ; but I feel as if in doing nothing all day, I had become as tired, and unfitted for attention, as by the most constant exertion of body or mind.

I must now, I believe, betake myself again to my note-book, for I do not seem to have a disposable idea at present. I find the following thoughts presented to my mind yesterday—‘ Manifest thy love,

O Lord, to our souls, and exert such composing influence upon our minds, as may recal our thoughts from all their wanderings ; that, as the eyes of a servant are unto the hand of his master, so our eyes may be unto thee, until thou have mercy upon us ; till thou give us to have “our conversation in Heaven,” continually and intensely “looking,” as for our only hope of happiness, “for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.” Let thy name be so hallowed by us, that it may keep us at a distance from everything which would provoke thee, and that we may be led to love and choose that, which shall please thee, and in which, through the infinite mercies of thy dear Son, we may find habitual acceptance with thee, and walk in the light of thy countenance.’

With this I must go on, for I have not a word or a thought, and am thinking of nothing but going to bed, though it is now only seven o’clock.—‘O Lord, who “as a Father pitieth his children, so art thou merciful to them that fear thee,” and who, as a Father chastens his children, so thou chastenest them who are thy children in Christ Jesus : thus would we be chastened, and in this spirit would we come to lay ourselves at thy feet. O Lord, thou art now humbling and proving us, thou hast laid thy gentle chastening upon us. But Oh ! what circumstances of alleviation, of tenderness, of support, of encouragement ! In the common view and language of the world, we are afflicted—But what is there in the affliction, that is not an advantage for drawing nearer to thee ? for retirement, and quiet, and resting from the distraction of worldly employment ? O Lord, pardon us, that we have so little improved these opportunities. ‘Raise us, we beseech thee, from the death of sin to the life of righteousness.’ Be pleased to heal our wounds, and

restore us to thy favour, through the precious bloodshedding of thy dear Son. Let us never forget, that we are in thy hands, and that we should be preparing to strike our tents at a moment's warning.' May the Lord have intense mercy upon us! I am perfectly well, but so worn and weary that I must go to bed.

Your affectionate,

N.

LETTER XXIV.

Coggeshall, April 9, 1835.

DEAREST L.

I am just, through that exquisite mercy of our God, arrived here safe and free from all pain, except the perpetual worry of my head. I have tried my memorandum-book and my bible. But I have been so feeble, as to be unable to fix my attention, and so carried away by a distracting frame of thought, as to be unable to recover my attention from foreign subjects. Yet "the Lord liveth, and blessed be my rock, and let the God of my salvation be exalted!"* On Him who hath brought me thither in safety, I rely to keep you, dearest, safe and in peace at home. May He look down upon us both in the infinite multitude of His mercies, through that blood, and influenced by that intercession, whereby our great High Priest "is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him!" Oh! how precious, even to the faint, and feeble, and perplexed state of mind at present, is that blessed truth.

* Psalm xviii. 46.

that our God "doeth all things well:" that His government of absolute sovereignty is a government of infinite wisdom, and infinite love; and by all the inevitable methods which He pursues with us, He is, I trust, forming and educating us for eternal communion with Himself. He brings us indeed sometimes "through fire and through water," but I trust it is to "bring us out into a wealthy place." * And if we are but at length to be "set before his face for ever, presented faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy," methinks we may endure anything He will enable us to endure, and take any road, which is to have such an end. O to have "the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, feeding us, and leading us to fountains of living waters, and God Himself wiping away all tears from our eyes!" † How it ought to shame us, and above all others, myself, who am the greatest shrinker from pain, when we hesitate to endure what annoys us in the present life, whether of exertion, or self-denial, or endurance.

Your affectionate,
N.

* Psalm lxvi. 12.

† Rev. vii. 17.

PART II.



LETTERS TO DIFFERENT MEMBERS OF
HIS FAMILY.

From the circumstance of Mr. Nottidge being the only child, the sphere of his own family connections was somewhat contracted, although he was ever ready to show consideration as occasion called for it. Mrs. Nottidge's family was however of much wider extension, and with its several members he entirely identified himself; and, having no children of his own, towards the younger branches of this line especially, enlarged by marriage, he poured out a flow of sympathy truly paternal. The correspondence about to be introduced will afford ample evidence of this affectionate interest; while it brings to survivors a painful recollection of the loss they have sustained in one, whose counsel and prayers were a treasure to the family circle of no common price.

LETTERS.

LETTER I.

TO MRS. N'S MOTHER, ON REMOVING FROM BOCKING
TO IPSWICH.

Bocking, Oct. 28, 1817.

How perverse is my nature, my dear Mother! I suppose three days seldom elapse without my proposing to myself to write to you; and yet I suffer something which seems insurmountable to prevent me. Now I seize my pen in the midst of moving my whole catalogue of moveables. But so it is—at least with me so it is—there is a peculiar inclination, and activity for certain things, which I experience only at certain times; and I very often experience it, when outward circumstances seem most untoward and unpropitious. I am a poor creature; but I trust “the Lord upholdeth me with his hand.” In general, the idea of moving even for a month or six weeks, is quite formidable to me. But now through great mercy I am moving for life; and my spirits have been kept even and tranquil, and free from a desponding sensation even for a minute.

Ipswich, Nov. 14.

Thus I wrote three weeks ago; and still I am

enabled to say the same on longer experience. I have now been carried through the whole business of removal, and am just arrived with dear Louisa at Ipswich, after having thoroughly emptied the house at Bocking. But though I saw every object that I had been accustomed to for the last forty years, changed from the shape and situation in which I had been used to view it; and though my feelings in those respects, have all my life been very pungent, yet I have never once been permitted to suffer any thing of the kind on the present occasion. Nor did my languid and dilatory proceedings dismay me. But I was carried through the small part I was enabled to take in the arrangements for removing, with a competent share of comfort, and quite my full usual share of activity. And when I could do nothing, I sat still without much vexation at being laid by.

Shall I say, I hope this is a sign of some little improvement in my constitution? And that I get a little more sensible of the comforts, and more insensible to the inconveniences, of life? It may be so. But the Lord forbid this should be all, or even the principal cause of the alteration I experience! I cannot but indulge the hope, that grace may have done something to set me above the pleasures as well as the inconveniences of the present existence; to melt my will more down into the will of God, and to enable me to find, that the sources of satisfaction are every where, if we will seek them. And if it be so, if a greater tranquillity with respect to temporals is indeed the fruit of some small increase of desire after heavenly things, how strong a motive is this to desire still more and more of that "godliness, which is profitable for all things, and so evidently "has the promise of the life which now is, as well as of that which is to

come!"* I can truly say that, while I become daily more convinced of the empty and unsubstantial nature of all earthly possessions and enjoyments, I find all the innocent pleasures and accommodations of life doubled and trebled. Truly "my cup runneth over. The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places." For mere comfort and satisfaction, I knew scarcely a circumstance that I wished altered before; and now I am come hither, though almost every thing is changed, I see nothing almost, but reasons for satisfaction.

But oh, for that remove, which shall exceed all our present enjoyments infinitely more, than they are above the most miserable condition, in which human nature can be placed! How unspeakably beyond all that even grace can do for us on earth, is one moment of the existence, to which the young person whom your letter speaks of, is gone! Put together all the satisfactions, which the most favoured servant of God ever enjoyed, in attending the ordinances, in converse with his fellow-Christians, in communion with God in private; and all is nothing, bears no comparison to one moment within the veil, where 'the souls that are delivered from the burden of the flesh are in joy and felicity.' I suppose it is, because we live so much below our privileges, that the elevation of mind, which Miss —— felt at the approach of her liberation from the body of sin and death, is not the common experience of all Christians. Paul "kept under the body, and brought it into subjection; was crucified unto the world by the cross of Christ; bore about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus; pleased not himself; sought not his own profit, but the profit of many, that they might be saved; endured all things for the elect's

* 1 Tim. iv. 8.

sake ;”* and he had glorious and encouraging views of death—“To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain—I know whom I have believed—I have fought a good fight ; I have finished my course ; I have kept the faith ; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.” † It should seem both from Paul’s example and from the example of all eminent Christians, that living above the world, and the objects of time and sense, does wonderfully clear the spiritual sight, and let in such clear views of the heavenly blessedness, as the ordinary run of diminutive Christians rob themselves of, and dim their eyes so that they cannot behold them. The Lord grant me more clear, abiding, heart-affecting views of the things that shall be hereafter !

Dec. 16.—Shall I tell you, my dear Mother, why I did not send this ? Because I thought it too much in the teaching strain. But perhaps I shall do no better. So I send it as it is with all its imperfections.

Your affectionate,
J. T. N.

LETTER II.

Jan. 24, 1823.

MY DEAR MOTHER,

I would say a word, in dependence upon the Divine blessing, respecting the all-sufficiency of our beloved Redeemer, the Saviour, and friend of us poor miserable sinners.

* 1 Cor. ix. 27. Gal. vi. 14. 2 Cor. iv. 10. 1 Cor. x. 33. 2 Tim. ii. 10.
† Phil. i. 21. 2 Tim. i. 12 ; iv. 7, 8.

When we look at ourselves, we must despond. Then I would look therefore, only to be made more deeply sensible of my need of Him, and of His continual willingness to hear and relieve all my complaints, according to that inexhaustible fulness, which is treasured up in Him for the express purpose, that He may give, and we may "receive of it, grace" for every time of need ;—and the time of need is every moment. He must pardon, accept and bless me every moment while I am writing ; or I can write nothing, and to no purpose. And He must afford His grace in the same way to you every moment, while hearing what I write ; or it can convey no comfort to you.

Here then is the source of comfort, that he is ever waiting to do this, not only in this particular instance, but in every moment of our lives. We need only open our eyes, and we shall see, as Hagar did, the well of water by our side,* overflowing, and ever full ; able to supply us every step of our pilgrimage even to the very last. Here is all the forgiveness, and the patience, all the love, all the forbearance, all the gentleness and tenderness, that we can ever need. It is quite inexhaustible, and always ready ; and as exactly and exquisitely suited to your case and mine every instant, as if it had been appointed and contrived only for that single case and that single moment.

May you and I live on Him, and praise Him, and trust Him !

This is the earnest, devout prayer, of

Your affectionate

J. T. N.

* Gen. xxi. 19.

LETTER III.

February 10, 1828.

MY DEAR MOTHER,

You will readily suppose that you are often on my mind: among other considerations, I have thought of those solemn and awful views of death and judgment, which become inexpressibly important and impressive, when they are *near* views.

Should these views become at any time painfully disquieting, it may, under the Lord's blessing, be profitable to call to mind these considerations.

Death must be alarming to our natural feelings, and judgment must put conscience to the same trembling, that it did Adam:—"I was afraid when I heard thy voice, because I was naked, and I hid myself."

It was the perfect knowledge of this, that induced our gracious God to "lay help for us upon one that is mighty." He knew how hard we should be pressed by guilt, and fear, and he provided a complete refuge for the trembling sinner to flee to, and be safe. Is it guilt that disquiets? "He bore our sins in his own body on the tree." He was therein truly and strictly our substitute. "He suffered, the just for the unjust," and for this very purpose, "that he might bring us to God." And this was all done by the authority of God the lawgiver. It was his own infinitely merciful, and loving way of setting us free from the demands of his own law. The law could not be altered, or relaxed. And therefore "the Lord laid on him all the iniquities" of them that flee to him for refuge. "Christ hath delivered us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. God hath made him to be sin for us

* Gen. iii. 10.

who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." *

And he is equally a refuge from weakness, as from guilt. Paul would have been glad to be delivered from the feeling of weakness, and perplexity, and distress, which he calls "a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him." But the Lord had a design of mercy to him, in refusing to comply with his wishes, though "he besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from him." But if it had been removed, Paul could not have had that home-felt sense of the preciousness and power of his Lord in upholding him under it. He would not have felt that grateful, admiring, adoring impression of His all-sufficiency. The Lord said to him—"My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness"—and then Paul could answer—"Most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. He could take pleasure in infirmities, in necessities, in distresses ;" and, when weak in himself, he found himself driven to seek, and delighted to find (by faith) his strength in the Lord Jesus.†

The precious views which the Gospel sets before us, are not intended to remove our sense of our own vileness, or weakness. But rather that we may "remember, and be ashamed, even when the Lord is pacified towards us, for all that we have done."—That we may never put any confidence in anything we have done, or any ordinances we have used, or any attainments we may seem to have made, but in Jesus, and his all-sufficiency alone.

Remember that the Lord has always ordered His dispensations, so as to produce this sense of vileness and sinfulness in his people, at the same time that He

* Is. liii. 6. Gal. iii. 13. 2 Cor. v. 21.

† See 2 Cor. xii. 7—10.

was manifesting to them the most gracious and the most glorious views of his pardoning mercy. Who could be more abased than the prodigal, the penitent in Jer. xxxi. 18—20, or Isaiah chap. vi? And yet on whom did the Lord look with greater favor and acceptance? We see also in the Psalms, as the 71st. that the sense of sin in God's people may sometimes create grievous conflict; but it is all for the greater manifestation of his grace in hearing and answering their prayers, applying the atonement, and bringing them nigh to himself by the blood of Jesus. Oh! says David, "what great troubles hast thou shewed me, and yet didst thou turn, and refresh me, and broughtest me from the deep of the earth again!"

I have always thought it a very correct, and instructive part of the Pilgrims, that in passing through the river, Christian experienced much conflict. It was wise in Bunyan not to omit a passage, which actually occurs in the experience of many believers.

These things are indeed suited to set the most distinct value on the promises. Indeed many of the most important promises would have no meaning, if we were not exposed to such trials. For instance, "when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee."* What are these waters, but the assaults made upon faith by unbelief, and by the tempter? These are the overflowings of ungodliness, which make the heart tremble, "the waters, which come in, even to the soul." But then these are the occasions, which call for the promise;—and these are the times, when the believer, though it may be with much fear and trembling, looks for the fulfilment of it. "My sins,"—says David, "have taken such hold upon me, that I am

* Is. xliii. 2.

not able to look up ; they are more in number than the hairs of my head ; and my heart hath failed me." But does he leave the matter there ? No, he flies to God for that comfort, which he could not find in his own heart—"Lord ! let it be thy pleasure to deliver me ; make haste, O Lord, to help me."* So in another place, he cries "out of the depths" in this way—"There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared" †—that we may not cast off fear, nor "restrain prayer before him," but that we may go on to wait on Him as He enables us, to fight against temptation, and to "hold fast the confidence of our rejoicing in Him, even to the end."—That, as we get an increasing sense of our guilt, weakness and emptiness, we may live more absolutely and simply upon His blood and righteousness, and strength, and fulness. May the Lord, my dear mother, "fulfil in you all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power ;" and "direct your heart into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ !"

Your affectionate

J. T. N.

LETTER IV.

MY DEAR MOTHER.

"They shall call his name Immanuel, which, being interpreted is—God with us." ‡ "God with us"—notwithstanding our unworthiness, sinfulness, fears and perplexities : God with us—in all our fears, sorrows,

* Ps. xl. 12, 13.

† Ib. cxxx. 4.

‡ Matt. i. 23.

troubles, and dangers. In the trials, and calamities of life, ‘in the hour of death, and at the day of judgment:’ “God with us”—for every purpose, for which we stand in need of him; for pardon, for acceptance, for supporting, refreshing, and especially for restoring the soul; prone as we are continually to wander from him, “God with us”—to carry us on to the end, “to preserve us unto his heavenly kingdom, and to present us faultless before his presence with exceeding joy.” God with us—to soften us to repentance: to make us glad with the joy of his salvation—to make our losses gain—to “perfect his strength in our weakness,” to “humble us, and to prove us, and to do us good at the last.”

Such may he be, my dear mother, to you, and me, and all ours, now and ever!

Your affectionate
J. T. N.

LETTER V.

TO A NIECE.

Ipswich, Sept. 20, 1821.

Now, my dear —— I am set down; and the pen, as you see, is in my hand, and the place favors. And now, what the Lord shall give me, I propose to send to you. You complain, dear —— of difficulties in your spiritual progress; and perhaps I could not easily supply an answer to any of all the perplexities, which you might bring forward in half an hour’s conversation. But I can perhaps produce a catalogue of the same kind, and to the same amount. I scramble

on from one piece of ice to another ; and, judging only from my own feelings and reflexions, I should say that nothing but ruin surrounds me. But then, I have, (I might almost say,) nothing to do with it—that is, as to responsibility. Jesus, on whom I hang my hopes, has said—“ He that believeth hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day. I give unto my sheep eternal life, and none shall pluck them out of my hand.”* So that (as Mr. Newton somewhere in substance says) though I see nothing but danger, and feel nothing but discouragement and defeat, yet I feel a confidence and tranquillity at bottom. I have attained to no regularity in exertion, either for my own spiritual interests, or those of others ; but faintly and feebly “ I follow after, if that I may apprehend that, for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.” I am faint—but “ he will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, till he bring forth judgment unto victory.” I believe I have nothing in view but his glory ; and though I seem to do nothing, I must not expect to do everything at once. If I am permitted to be but a door-keeper in employment, to eat but of the crumbs of consolation, to “ wash the feet of the servants of my Lord,” I ought to think it an honour too great for me even suitably to acknowledge. So I creep on with hopes and fears, as must be the case with mutable creatures, and with discouragements and revivals ; and I suppose so does our dear child. Do not think, though I seem to settle the matter so easily in words, that I suppose you go on, or can possibly go on, without conflict ; or that I forget this is the case. I often think of you and your dear husband, though I am so shamefully silent, and sometimes,

* John vi. 40 ; x. 28.

when enabled, cast up my thoughts for a blessing upon you. I trust the Lord will bless you both, and make you a blessing. And I think I see his hand so clearly with you, that amidst all your complaints against yourself, I feel persuaded, that you have more to rejoice in, than to complain of, even from the very language in which those complaints are uttered.

Your affectionate
J. T. N.

LETTER VI.

AFTER THE DEATH OF A CHILD.

Ispwish, Feb. 23, 1838.

Well, dearest child, I know not in what state these lines will find you; recently in delicate health yourself, and after this sudden and unexpected blow of the Lord's hand. But I know it is my privilege to commit you to Him, "who bore our sins in his own body on the tree," and who sustained all his martyred servants, from Abel to the present hour; and one in particular. Anne Askew, when, like her dear Saviour, "all her bones were out of joint," with the persecutor's rack, and "her heart" as to habitual strength, was probably "like melting wax!"* Though we are slow to believe it, dear —, this is a valley of tears, and the Lord sends lesson upon lesson, till this is impressed on our minds. But if it were not so, we should want all the enjoyment, that arises from the belief and ex-

* Ps. xxii. 14.

perience of the power, grace, faithfulness, and tender sympathy of our great Shepherd. May He, in the exercise of that grace, collect and strengthen all the faculties of your soul to that one truth—"It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good!"* It is the Lord—who, when our redemption was to be accomplished, said—"Lo, I come;"—"Who humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." It is the Lord—who was actually nailed to that cross, and who cried out under the desertion, which as man he endured—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"† It is the Lord,—who has taken the remembrance of all this with him to the right hand of the Majesty on High, whither he is exalted even in his human nature, to be Head over all things to his Church, and to administer the government and management of it with exquisite regard and infinitely suitable interposition for the whole mystical body, and each particular individual.

I was much struck with that passage in the first evening lesson of yesterday. "He knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness."‡ Yes—He knows, and so admirably fore-appoints the whole journey, and each particular event and step, that none can be spared or altered, without disturbing and destroying the whole plan.

And remember, dear child, that if he was but in one instance to acquiesce to our wishes, and substitute one suggestion of ours for his, we should not only derange the infinitely perfect plan of our salvation, but destroy that which is the instrumental cause of its accomplishment—*Faith*. We never could trust him again; for we should know that he had forsaken the

* 1 Sam. iii. 18.

† Matt. xxvii. 46.

‡ Deut. ii. 7.

trust deposited in him, and made infinite wisdom, (charged with the care of our souls) give place to the folly of a worm. I have said it is my privilege to commit you into his hands—and your dear husband, and the little ones, and to leave you there, where “the eternal God is your refuge, and the everlasting arms beneath you.”* And may you be favoured with David’s view of that retreat—“Thou art my hiding-place, thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. From the ends of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I. I will dwell in thy tabernacle for ever, for thou hast been a refuge for me.” † There may you be supported, and remember that your collectedness may be very important for your husband, as well as for yourself. Females have certain qualities of mind, which under grace, render them perhaps more fitted to endure affliction than men. We *reason* more, and being stouter, we resist more, and so get the heavier blow from the storm; and then, when laid prostrate, we want the help of those, whom at other times it is our privilege and pleasure to endeavour to support and animate. Remember also your dear children, and do not be absorbed in that one whom the Lord has taken to himself. “Lift up thy prayer,” and be doubly diligent to use all means, for “the remnant that are left,” that they may be blessings to you and all about them in their pilgrimage, and abundantly blessed in their own souls.

Every blessing attend you both.

Your affectionate,
N

* Deut. xxxiii. 27.

† Ps. xxxii. 7; lxi. 2, 3.

P. S.—The long-suffering God and Father of his people, has now borne my manners in the wilderness threescore and two years.

LETTER VII.

UPON THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE AFFLICTION.

DEAREST ———

May the Lord be abundantly and appropriately with you, and dear ———, and suit his peculiar supports and consolations to the impression, which the anniversary of your sharp trial may not impossibly bring with it! Seasons have often a very powerful and vivid effect on my own feelings. For myself, I am much as I have been; rather less exercised with actual feelings than I was awhile ago. One thing, I think, I find, that faith and feeling are perfectly distinct and opposed to each other; and that, though they act powerfully on each other in opposite scales, they never can intrude into each other's province. Faith counteracts natural feeling, when it enables the martyr to lay down his head on the block. But it no more alters the feeling, than it prevents the axe from severing the vertebra of the neck. It may please the Lord at the same time to give faith, and to relieve feeling. But they are as distinct acts, and apply with as much distinctness to the subject of their influence, as the healing of a bodily wound, and the strengthening the faculty of the understanding.

I have continually intended to repeat my assault upon ——— Vicarage; but one thing dismisses me, only

to be laid hold of by another : and the weather has been very embarrassing and discouraging.

Your affectionate,
N.

LETTER VIII.

TO THE SAME JUST BEFORE LEAVING HOME ON A JOURNEY OF
RELAXATION.

Ipswich, Aug. 6, 1841.

DEAREST ———.

I will not leave myself, dearest —, at the mercy of Saturday's hurry, but seize a few minutes to-day, that I may not let you set off without the affectionate expression of my wishes, and desires that your excursion may be a real relaxation. May the good Lord, who has all things, natural, intellectual, and spiritual, under his control, and at his disposal, make every thing, yes *every* thing, to work together for you and dear ——'s good. He engages for nothing less, than the co-operation of all things for the good of his children. See that you hold him to his word, and that, as he has "caused you to hope in it,"* you expect every thing, which in that word he has promised. Determine, like Dr. Thaulerus's Beggar, to have nothing but "*good days*" all the way. Wake every morning with the expectation of another smile from your heavenly Father; and when you have had sweet converse with him at his throne, and in his word, of grace; begin the work or journey of the day in full persuasion, that he hands you into the carriage, commissions the air to

* Ps. cxix. 49.

revive your spirits, brighten your cheeks, and brace your strength : that he carries you through fatigue, if needful, and lays you on your bed, and draws the curtains of night around you, and brings you the sleep which he “ gives to his beloved.” * “ These things will he do unto you, and will not forsake you.” † I trust to see you return in all respects benefited : and that the Lord will make you experience the blessings of spiritual communion in still richer abundance than natural bounty, and providential comforts. If you have a pencil on Loch Lomond, send me a line, as you did from Ulswater, but I charge you not to think about it, except the thing come spontaneously across your mind, there or elsewhere. I will not have you lose a moment’s breeze, or landscape, or conversation. But if, consistently with other things, you can drop me a line, no matter what about, you may be sure it will be a prize at Ipswich.

Your affectionate uncle,
J. T. N.

P. S. I am making an arrangement to do good, and subserve the Lord’s glory. Remember me, when you speak to the King. I doubt not, and have often reflected on it with encouragement, that I have been indebted instrumentally to yours, and ——’s intercession for me, in the path wherein I go, and for the support, and preservation in it. Once more—the Lord be with you !

* Ps. cxxvii. 2.

† Is. xlii. 16.

LETTER IX.

April 22, 1843.

DEAREST ———.

Had my silence been voluntary, it would have been particularly ungrateful. Your last precious little communication arrived just in time to be a commentary on a subject, which had then occupied a good deal of my attention—"From whom the whole body, fitly framed together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love."* Your note came just when I wanted, and was also able to enjoy it, and turned my thoughts so sweetly to the accomplishment, after this life's painful journey, of our dear Lord's prayer—"Father, I will, that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, &c." †—that it did indeed illustrate the benefit and comfort, which the individuals of his mystical body derive from the joints of relation in providence and grace, which he has established between them, and by which they communicate to each other what they receive from the Head. I am to preach to-morrow (D.V.) on "Father, I will, &c." What a thought! To be in a condition, where no one communication of Divine grace will ever be undervalued, misimproved, or fail of producing its full effect, to our blessedness and the Divine glory: and when every thing we do, will have the complete Divine approbation, and we shall have the objective satisfaction of beholding the

* Eph. iv. 16.

† John xvii. 24.

smile of that incessant approbation on his adorable countenance! Love to all.

Your affectionate
J. T. N.

LETTER X.

ON THE BIRTH OF A CHILD.

Ipswich, April 2, 1831.

MY DEAR —,

How much pleasure it would have given me, if I could have seized half an hour during the last ten days, to have congratulated you on the arrival of the little pilgrim lately come to this planet! But I have been (at least for a poor creeping creature like myself) incessantly employed, and with the usual result of bearing a sense of increasing omissions—upon my conscience. One thing, however, more decidedly kept me from writing, that I watched from day to day, for an opportunity of coming over, which in prospect, and until I came in actual contact with the engagements of this week, I had promised myself I should be able to do.

Well: you will accept for yourself, and convey to dear — our kindest love; and the assurance of the happiness it affords us from the first we have heard of this joyful and merciful event, and of the Lord's continued and incessant mercy since. May he set his seal, and make his claim to the dear infant, and from the moment of its birth, incline you both to ask for such things for him in your prayers, as shall be the expres-

sion of his own gracious designs, and the anticipation of his unboundedly gracious doings! When we look at the incalculable variety of danger that attends the passage of every human being through this wilderness, we cannot but tremble at seeing one entering upon so perilous a path. But when we see the exceeding great and precious promises, and are enabled to realize our relation to the God who gave them all; we have the strongest assurance, that he is superabundantly able to make us "more than conquerors through him that hath loved us." And when moreover we remember what he has actually done for ourselves, and our friends, in bringing them to the saving knowledge of himself, we have the strongest encouragement to persevere in prayer to the end: and to leave all our wishes respecting our tenderest connexions, in faith, to his management.

For myself, I seem to labor under a difficulty of a peculiar kind. I hope I am living in some degree by faith. But my brain seems to be so worn, that I have hardly sufficient strength and clearness of intellectual exertion to ascertain at any moment, that I am living by faith. This is a sore embarrassment to every thing. And as I have seldom found much more mental observation than at present, that is a reason why I should no longer waste your time with sentences written in the dark. Once more, kind love,

Your affectionate

N.

LETTER XI.

ASKING FOR SOME MINISTERIAL ASSISTANCE.

MY DEAR ——,

There is one at my elbow, who telleth me—‘ It is of no use to trouble your friend to come over, for your feebleness makes it impossible for any body to help you. You are the same specimen of *vis inertiae* that ever you were. And you will only go on to trouble your friends, disgrace your advisers, and discredit the cause you mean to serve. Why should you hazard taking him from where he is doing his Master’s work, to bring him over here to do perhaps nothing?’

To this I answer——that if it please the Lord to let me feel yet more of my weakness, and to see the little that is done, encumbered with, or even to hide it under, that slovenly litter of my weaknesses and mistakes, yea, and sins, sins—it shall still please me ; if he but give me some little consciousness, that he has made me willing to please him, and that he still brings me back to him out of all my rebellions and despondings. Come then whenever you can : for half an hour’s conversation is worth an hour’s writing. Dear ——, the Lord abundantly bless you ! I would not rob you of one atom of your strength for the Lord, to help myself with. Nor has my spiritual poverty, I hope, disabled me from rejoicing in the gifts and graces of my Lord’s more favoured ones, even as if they were my own.

Your affectionate

Our dear loves to you both.

N.

LETTER XII.

DEAR ——,

“The Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means !” * I seem (as Mr. Newton says) to have peace at bottom ; though it is so hid, that I cannot get at it to see it distinctly. And then, in consequence of that, I cannot avail myself of it in my daily proceedings. I am always in a cloud of confusion. I hope it is mental, not spiritual. For I trust “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.” And then, if indeed the power of Christ be glorified in these infirmities, I can desire, and do desire, nothing more. I seem to have no more ground to doubt my spiritual life and functions than my natural. But a hazy brain seems to make me almost capable of doubting of both ;—and then, when I look for evidences of either, I find that in each case, though there is life, it is the life of an invalid. Well ! let me at least have as much faith as a sceptic. Hume said, though he doubted his existence, he acted in all things as a man who did exist, and I will endeavour to do so spiritually—“He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live,” † is better encouragement than Hume had. Dear love to you all.

Your affectionate

N.

* 2 Thess. iii. 16.

† John xi. 25.

LETTER XIII.

TO HIS SISTER-IN-LAW.

Sept. 1812.

MY DEAR ———.

I know you will do me the justice to believe, that I was concerned at hearing that business had demanded your presence in town rather suddenly. Your kind letter, which reached me yesterday morning, was a great relief to the suspense we could not avoid feeling till we heard from you. I hope your presence may, through the Divine blessing, be instrumental in settling every thing in the channel and direction, that shall be most satisfactory to yourself, and most for the happiness and advantage of all parties concerned. To complete such an arrangement will however require some little time. But your letter conveys to us intelligence that is even more important than this. I mean that you have found it good to be interested in the promises—that “the Lord is good to them that seek him;” that he makes a difference “between them that serve him and them that serve him not,” and that they are “blessed that wait for him.” True indeed it is—“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.”* For this reason, though I shall be truly happy to hear that things are in such a train as to relieve you from any painful feelings, I can feel no doubt about the event, I know that, whatever it is, it will be ordered in weight and measure by infinite love and wisdom: and I am enabled to trust, that it shall be for His honour

* Is. xxvi. 3.

and glory, and your spiritual and eternal benefit. Whatever the Lord has in view for me, or any of my dear friends, for the rest of the time we have to spend here on earth, I trust he will enable us to bless him when "he takes away, as well as when he gives." When he gives we can have little enjoyment, unless we enjoy himself in every thing he bestows; and when he takes away, we cannot be losers, for we still have every thing in him. In his promises we know not which to admire most, the infinite extent or the boundless variety of them; so that we are not only invited to "come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need;"* but we have for almost every particular want a specific form of promise ready drawn out. We are indeed sure, that the Lord will never return these promises upon our hands, but that they shall always be negotiable at the infinite treasury of Divine grace, and all-sufficiency, and be exchanged for that exact degree and kind of help that we want; and that it shall be applied with an accuracy and suitableness, which, if it were left to us, we could neither "ask nor think." Yet with all this we are further overpowered with the gracious manner in which it is done. As if his promise repeated a thousand times were not sufficient, he has so far condescended to our weakness, and the littleness of our faith, as to endorse his promise with an oath; "that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible that God should lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us; which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the

* Heb. iv. 16.

veil." * This does indeed, correctly speaking, refer to the promise of everlasting salvation through our blessed Redeemer. But by scriptural inference, it applies to every thing that is needful for us. "For he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" † He will not only give us all things that are really good for us, but will bring good out of evil, sweetness out of the strong. For the Apostle says—"We know that all things shall work together for good to them that love God." ‡ The difficulties and discouragements that stand in the way of earthly help are nothing in his way. But he on the contrary especially challenges the encounter of difficulties, for he says—"Call upon me."—When?—"In the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." § And by way of anticipating and answering all objections, and apprehensions, he adds,—“As thy day so shall thy strength be. I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” So that we may boldly say, “The Lord is my help, I will not fear.” ||

Your affectionate

N.

LETTER XIV.

May 4, 1814.

The accounts we receive of your health are far from being congenial to our wishes, and I do not know whether a letter is likely to be agreeable to you.

* Heb. vi. 18, 19.

† Rom. viii. 32.

‡ Ib. v. 28.

§ Ps. l. 15.

|| Deut. xxxiii. 25. Heb. xiii. 5, 6.

I console myself with the hope, that, if a little friendly communication does not contribute to your comfort, the intention of it will be so obvious, as to prevent its occasioning uneasiness. And if the hurry of your spirits renders it a trouble, be assured, you will do me the greatest favour, by putting it, without hesitation, behind the fire. If, on the contrary, you have half an hour at liberty, I shall make bold to occupy it.

If I know any thing, by experience, (and I think I do) of the present state of your mind, it discovers itself, with respect to religion, in a want of the usual satisfaction, with which the mind rests upon those fundamental truths, which are familiarly known, and are usually the support of all our comforts and tranquillity—truths, which we have experimentally found able to soothe and assure the mind “in six troubles and in seven ;” but which that state of body which we call nervous, and which so strongly affects the operations of the mind, renders comparatively tasteless and uninteresting. And, together with this decrease of satisfaction in the grand points, from which my mind, when at ease, derives its comforts, I have, at such seasons of indisposition, usually found an increase of anxiety about points of comparatively smaller importance, so as to have my day and night spent in discussing unprofitable questions, and finding no end, “in wandering mazes lost.” And as we can never reach the bottom of such questions, or perplexing train of thought, which may (as they commonly do) occupy the mind at such times ; I shall just suggest what I have found the most effectual way, either of escaping from them, or in some degree neutralizing their effects.

First.—The consideration of the infinite power of God as “able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we can ask or think,” to work by contraries, to

bring good out of evil, and to make “all things work together for our good.” I say to my mind—‘How perplexed soever the prospect is, God is infinite.—Nothing can be beyond him. What perplexes me is something I can think of. But His resources are beyond all that I can form any imagination of.’

Secondly.—The love of God in Christ, as this mighty power in our behalf, as having done more for us already than we had now to ask for; as being the source of all the desire we feel after his favour.—For if “we love him, it is because he first loved us.” *

Thirdly.—In the promise of God to make his “strength perfect in our weakness,” and that “his grace shall be sufficient for us.” This enabled St. Paul to “glory in his infirmities,” which he had before begged to have removed. Let us be waiting and begging for his grace, that we may be enabled to say—“When I am weak, then am I strong.” † Many, who are ready to faint at the thought of how little they have been able to do for the glory of God, and the adorning of their profession in time of health, have (when brought low by sickness) struggled with such evident effect under the Divine blessing against their infirmities, that bystanders have been compelled to say—“This hath God wrought, for they perceived it was his work.” To “set the Lord always before us,” ‡ as the Psalmist did, is too obviously our duty and our interest to need enlarging on it. But we are perhaps not always so much aware of the peculiar suitableness of it as a refuge in time of perplexity. As a grand, simple, uniform idea, it stands opposed to the entangled variety, and never-ending changeableness of our thoughts. As an infinite resource, it goes beyond all

* 1 John iv. 19.

† 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10.

‡ Ps. xvi. 8.

our difficulties, though they surround us on all sides. And though it may be so intercepted from us, that we cannot derive that sensible comfort from the idea which we might, if we could contemplate it more distinctly; yet it is consolatory to dwell on the *reality* of that sun, which the cloud hides, and the *certain* return of that day, which the night interrupts only for a season.

LETTER XV.

TO HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW, ON THE DEATH OF THE ABOVE.

Halstead, July 31, 1814.

The melancholy event, which deprives you of a partner, and us of a sister, was communicated to us this morning. Topics of consolation, if we turn to what has been thought, and said, and done by those, who have experienced similar afflictions, present themselves in plenty: but how powerless are they in the season of trouble! You have indeed many important subjects of consolatory reflexion. But the Supreme disposer of events, and contrroller of hearts, can alone enable you to extract the support which they afford: and it is not often experienced under the first impression of so severe a trial.

One thing we are evidently called to, both by duty and interest—composed submission to the will of God, now made known by His providential dispensation. And as we cannot for ourselves—out of any materials, however suitable,—frame any consolation, we should be constantly on our guard not to suffer the mind to

dwell on any statement, which natural reluctance will often suggest, tending to aggravate our sufferings, exasperate our feelings, and to delay the arrival of more tranquillizing views. Yet it must be remembered, it is not by length of time alone that we are to look for the alleviation of sorrow. This does indeed, in a thousand instances, by degrees *skin* the mind, and prepare it for being occupied with some present pursuit, by which, if capable of being so engrossed, it is filled at length, and pain is worn away. But where this is all, foundation is laid for a succession of disappointments, and the greatest comes last; the consciousness of having employed the whole of life upon subjects having no direct connexion with durable peace of mind at the last. There is but one object, the Almighty God, and but one view of him, namely in Jesus Christ—"reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them,"* that can lay a durable foundation for tranquillity of mind. This is an object, which, like the sun, affords light itself, and shews by that light the true situation and relation of every other object.† If we truly admit this into our minds, we are prepared to see mercy in all the Lord's dealings. And much mercy there is mingled with the circumstances attending your affliction. You have seen a mind harassed in the beginning with a restlessness, which was the cause of the greatest concern to her friends, as well as yourself, so completely removed or subdued, before her faculties were at all impaired, as to afford a very comfortable hope, that her mind did steadily contemplate the Almighty hand in every circumstance of her trial, and distinctly acknowledge it.

* 2 Cor. v. 19.

† See Ps. xxxvi. 9.

Her expressions concerning the nature of that hope, which she felt in prospect of death—were not of the confidence, which excludes all doubt and perplexity : but mixed with a humble consciousness of undeserved mercy. . . . I am obliged to conclude in great haste.

Believe me truly yours,
N.

LETTER XVI.

TO A NIECE ON SOME SCRIPTURAL DIFFICULTIES.

Ipswich, Dec. 24, 1824.

MY DEAR ———.

I shall endeavour to speak a word to two points in your letter, which seem at present most urgent ; and may the Giver of all wisdom, give you and me “ understanding in all things !” You have found some difficulty arising from Rom. viii. 29, 30. We must judge of our thoughts, and reject, or adopt them according to their tendency, and according to the general doctrine of the Gospel. Now if you should yield to this suggestion, ‘ that it is nonsense to pray, strive, or obey, if you are not one of the elect,’ and should decline from any endeavour to do so for the future, who would be gratified, and whose purpose would be answered ? Do not you see, from what quarter this suggestion comes ? You are not likely any longer to be drawn blindfold along the broad road to destruction. But the enemy of souls perhaps regards it as not so impossible, that you may be drawn

into unbelief; and that, if you cannot be overthrown, you may at least be harrassed in yourself, and rendered useless to others, and bring no honour to God; if he can by some perversion of Scripture, fill your mind with groundless fears, and lead you to distrustful and disobedient steps. "He that believeth shall be saved—The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger."* This is the general broad doctrine of Scripture, and if we meet with some passages "hard to be understood," we must understand them in consistence with, and subservience to, those which are clear and easy.

Now let us endeavour to apply the texts above cited to the present case—Have you not been led to believe your state by nature to be what the Scripture describes it, a fallen, lost, helpless state? Have you not also been led to believe, that Christ is an all-sufficient, suitable, and willing Saviour for those, who apply to him as lost sinners? And have you not applied to him, and do you not continue, though it may be very poorly, and with much discouragement, to apply to him as such?

Now if *indeed* you do this, here are two links already to be found in you of the golden chain, which connects the election of the believer and his eternal glory together. You have been "called," and have complied with the call—You have believed, and are in consequence "justified" by Christ, in whom you have believed—If all this is yet very imperfect, "watch and pray," that the Lord would bless and bring forward his work in your soul. "Give diligence"—as Peter exhorts, "to make your calling and election sure;" † to make your "calling" evident by its

* Mark xvi. 16. Job xvii. 9.

† 2 Peter i. 10.

effects, and thence to prove that it is the consequence of God's unchangeable choice of you. For this is the way in which his choice manifests itself in any particular individual—"I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee."* The marks and evidences of election are of a practical and experimental kind. When Paul speaks of the Thessalonians, "Knowing your election of God;" he adds in the following verse, the grounds on which he concluded they were elected.†

On the other hand remember, that, though a perversion of the decree of election might be made the occasion, it would not be the cause, of your perishing. The enemy makes use of this to lead you out of the plain path of faith and obedience—And then, if the Lord cast off, it is not on the ground of your having been out of the decree of election; but because you have listened to the adversary, have indulged unbelief, have refused to receive the record given by God—that "whoso believeth in the Son hath everlasting life."‡ and because you have been led from false and ungrounded fears, to neglect the known duties of prayer, watchfulness, reading the Scriptures, &c. The suggestion comes in a speculative form. But the attack is made in experience and in practice.

I have left myself scarce any room to speak to another point which you mention, the proposed employment of your Sabbath time. The difficulty in such cases, is first to make up our minds as to what is right, and then to put in execution what we are persuaded we might do. Now I think you seem to have been carried through the first difficulty already. You say—'God will be angry with me, if I profane

* Jer. xxxi. 3.

† 1 Thess. i. 4, 5.

‡ John iii. 15, 16.

that holy day,—and no longer look upon me as his child; and then will my enemies triumph over me. And much as I honour my dear papa, I ought to honour my God more.’ So then you are persuaded in your own mind, what you ought to do. Now then, if you pray to God for wisdom, composure, and gentleness, to represent to him your wish to be absent on that evening from worldly amusements; and if you do this with the same kindness of manner, that you have perhaps sometimes used in asking for something, which conscience did not quite so well approve; you may find yourself agreeably surprised by a ready compliance from Papa. If it be otherwise, you will have taken such steps as you are persuaded is the path of duty; and if it does not succeed, you must pray to be directed as to the next step. And I hope to be lifting up my poor feeble petitions, that you may be guided aright.

Your affectionate,
N.

LETTER XVII.

Ipswich, Dec. 13, 1827.

MY DEAR S.

I am anxious to seize the first moment I can to write to you, and not lose the opportunity of writing at all, by putting it off to a more convenient season. You will thus probably, get a short letter, instead of the *intentem* of a long one.

You want some interesting book of history. I think you might find Russell’s “Modern Europe” suit your

purpose. It is a period (particularly the last three or four centuries,) with which you ought to be acquainted. I also think the work is accompanied with a continued table of contents, which will much assist your memory. You should accustom yourself to abridge every century with your pen, and then compare it afterwards with the table. See whether you have omitted any thing that is material, and introduced any thing which is of less importance, and observe in general what improvements you can make in it. Then remember these in your abstract of the next century, and I think you would find it an interesting, and useful employment.

Let your attention be directed to constant and un-deviating amiableness, and particularly wait, and earnestly pray, and you may see great things yet, such as you do not expect. When I was young, I created a great many difficulties for myself. I do not mean to say that you do. But most young people need a little advice to be on their guard in this particular.

But then to be amiable, you must be cheerful, and to be cheerful you must have suitable thoughts of God. How can even reason suffer you to believe, that "God, who is love," would ever suffer a poor creature, who desires to be reconciled to him, to fail of this reconciliation through a determination of the Deity that he never should obtain it? Whence are your desires or mine of being reconciled to God? Can they come from any quarter but from himself? You still want what I told you you wanted, simple reliance on the truth of the Divine promise. What does the Lord say—"Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."* Is this true, or is it not? And if it be, then though I should wait all the days of my life, I cannot be disappointed. Faith

* John vi 37.

will wait. But if you are determined to have sensible comfort, and to measure your hopes by that, you will believe one day, and not believe the next. "God is love." My dear child, let nothing beat you away from that truth. Keep to that single point, or take any fundamental truth of the Gospel, and stick to it. Suffer not your thoughts to wander, and disperse themselves in melancholy trains. But return again and again to one truth—Say to yourself again and again—"God is love"—It is as true as that I breathe, or eat, or sit in this chair. One such truth firmly laid hold on would scatter your distressing thoughts, as the wind drove the Egyptian locusts into the Red Sea.*

Your affectionate

J. T. N.

LETTER XVIII.

July, 1823.

DEAR CHILD,

Take a few lines when I have time for no more. Remember—faith, i. e. reliance and repose upon God in Christ for pardon, justification, and every blessing in time and eternity—is the essence, the mainspring of religion. Aim at this; pray for this; continually return to this; exercise your mind about this, to get it clearly, and distinctly before your mind—And aim and pray to be enabled to exercise this *distinctly*; and without reference to any thing you are or have done, or hope, or fear to do. Then in the strength of this

* Ex. x. 19.

sweet persuasion of God's goodness through Christ, and thoroughly persuaded that he has every blessing in store for you, (even though from the feebleness of your faith you have no present perception or enjoyment of them) wait in hope (see Gal. v. 5. and do me the kindness to read that chapter every day for the next month, to understand it as you would a new theory in philosophy, and pray all the while that God would enlighten your mind, and warm your heart by it.) And as to the course of every day, do the best you can, always avoiding known or strongly-suspected sin, and be satisfied with your doings. Much of our vexation about that, is self-righteousness in disguise, and withers the very root of faith and comfort. Cultivate universal kindness and good humour. Converse with interest, and take an intelligent view of whatever occurs in general conversation. Sacrifice every inclination not connected with clear paramount duty to God, that you may habitually know the exquisite pleasure of pleasing others; and that you may have the satisfaction of hoping, that you "please them to their good for edification."* It is impossible to say how much time and spiritual strength is wasted in maintaining points of no consequence. I wasted the greater part of my life in it. Since I have taken the other way, I never find regret, but always find the richest comfort in suppressing my own opinion, and giving up my own inclination, where not connected with duty to God. It leaves my mind in the tranquillity of a shepherd's boy. It gives me great advantage with those who habitually know me, and are persuaded that I seldom make anything unimportant a subject of difference of opinion, and therefore attach a degree of

* Rom. xv. 2.

weight to my representations when I feel compelled to differ.

Your affectionate
J T. N.

LETTER XIX

ON THE DEATH OF HER FATHER.

Ipswich, Nov. 24, 1829.

MY DEAR ———.

How truly does it grieve me that your present communication is of so distressing a nature! I have scarcely known a period so short as the last few months, in which so many of our friends have been afflicted or removed.

May the Lord bless your earnest concern for your dear Father! I enter into your feelings. I know what it is to attend a dying Father's bed, and to find my tongue tied, when I should be endeavouring to minister to his spiritual benefit. I do not mean that I was absolutely negligent; but it is impossible to satisfy one's self with any degree or amount of endeavour to minister to the spiritual demands of a dying parent.

Nov. 25th.—And I sympathize in your loss. A friend is gone, whom I never met but with pleasure; and who, I know, took an unfeigned interest in all that related to our comfort and welfare.

But we must "weep, as though we wept not." Our tears will not recal one atom of the comfort we have lost; and if we indulge them too much, (our heavenly

Father forbids not the moderate indulgence of the feelings of affectionate regret,) we shall unfit ourselves both for duty and happiness.

We have ourselves also to prepare for the same event which has bereaved us. We are weeping to-day ; we may be wept for to-morrow. You have been long lingering, my dear ——, as I myself did, at the threshold of religion ; not quite willing to take up the cross, and follow the Lord Jesus ; not fully prepared to “count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.” May this loud call at length awaken and determine you ! When Lot “lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, (the Lord being merciful to him,) and brought him out of the city.”* So the Lord sends at this time the angel of affliction to “lay hold on your hand,” and draw a line of separation henceforth between you and an empty, sinful, ensnaring world, doomed to eternal destruction.

And you must form your decision instantly. Let but the world and Satan find your heart softened with sorrow, yet not filled ; occupied and supported by the presence of the Lord Jesus dwelling in it by faith, but vacant, and languid, and looking round for something, that shall plausibly, and perhaps, affectionately soothe you, (for there is great and real kindness in the world in their way,) if they find you thus, how next to impossible, that you should escape that decline in the state of the soul, that ends in spiritual death !

Whenever after any trying dispensation, (especially the loss of near and dear friends,) I did not get nearer to the Lord, and in any respect stifled, or diverted the present convictions of my mind, I always found, that I was drawing off from him, and from every thing

* Gen. xix. 16;

spiritual, to a greater distance, and became at length so involved in worldly pleasures, friendships, and connexions, that I was saved at last by a miracle of grace, beyond perhaps what has happened to almost any but a few extraordinary cases.

You and dear —— are in greater danger,—if you take any other than a most determined path, or if you are satisfied with anything less than devoting yourselves to the Lord—of being miserable in the midst of all the comforts of life here, and hazarding the everlasting welfare of your souls hereafter. May the Lord of his infinite mercy shape your path, and direct and draw you to himself!

Your truly affectionate
N.

How truly it will pierce my heart, if either of you should be anything less than happy!

LETTER XX.

Ipswich, May 2, 1836.

MY DEAR ——.

I rejoice that I have got my pen in hand; for, entangling as are my engagements and infirmities, I had determined in my own mind, (as much as so feeble a creature, and who seems to live to be defeated, can determine,) that I would acknowledge your very kind letter. It is delightful to hear, that our very gracious Lord has been so mindful of dear ——. How much is there in this to encourage our entire reliance on him, and to excite us to incessant perseverance in prayer,

both for her and for all persons and things, for which we have obligation or inducement to pray! Yes, and what an encouragement to *feeble* prayer! For see—“The Lord heareth the poor, and despiseth not his prisoners.”* He keeps us, perhaps, on bread and water in spirituals—seems to let our souls read and hear, and yet our meals are not blessed: and yet “he hears” our cry, and “despises us not,” though he keeps us “prisoners.” The expression has many encouraging inferences. He calls these, “prisoners of hope.” He bids them “turn to the stronghold.”† He assigns them counsel for their approaching trial at the great assize—one who never lost a cause, one who never threw up a brief, who “will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, till he bring forth judgment unto” both “victory” for us, and “truth” for God’s claims.‡ Let us pray for her preservation, and support, and furniture, with all needful gifts for usefulness and happiness.

But I have more to be grateful for about myself in your letter. You have been kindly exercised with concern about me, as the anniversary of the loss of almost all, that made life as life sensibly an enjoyment, has returned.§ Cultivate this feeling, dear —. It will make you, under the Lord’s blessing, the successful comforter of many a child of sorrow, and it will be a source of the purest and most effectual materials of happiness in your own mind. There is a general kindness, and a general sympathy, which is entitled to our gratitude, but which often much more distinctly excites our acknowledgment, than tends to our alleviation; because it evidently springs from no

* Ps. lxxix. 33. † Zech. ix. 12. ‡ Matt. xii. 20, with Is. xlii. 3.

§ The anniversary of the death of his beloved wife.

specific attention to the case. Thus we see some persons eager, and even melted with compassion on the occurrence of distress, or grief of any kind; and this continues a certain time. But if after that they are, or seem to be referred, or recalled in any way to the case, in which they took such tender interest, the time seems gone by, and sorrows and sympathies are as out of date, as the crapes and sables, which usurp the name of mourning. How thankful should I be, that in yourself and so many other kind friends I have those, who enter more specifically into the case, and not only feel for me as a sufferer, but understand, in some measure, how and what I suffer! There is nothing, which is more commended to us in Scripture, nor urged by the example of our dear Lord, nor confirmed by the example of his people, than “weeping with them that weep.” Nor is there anything, which, dwelt on, leads more to the searching of Scripture, nor renders it more productive and profitable, than the endeavour to comfort the mourner, and to comfort our own minds on their account, by the Divine promises made to them. There is nothing which leads more to the consideration of our sin, which made even the *Son of God* “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;” nor finally, which brings home the sweet assurance, that even in heaven he sympathizes with the most perfect correspondence with the feelings, and “is touched with a sense of the infirmities” of his people. But I must conclude. Cease not to pray for me. I have felt very acutely at times the return of the season. But I hope “all will work for good.” My best and most fervent love in our dear Lord, be with you all.

LETTER XXI.

St. Helen's, Dec. 1837.

MY DEAR —,

I sometimes catch a moment amidst my bewildering employment, to think of you in my solitary cell, or my meditative walks. May the Lord bless you, my dear child, and watch over you with his special favour : and impart every desirable energy to your health, and bless every means for its benefit ! But above all, may he make the anxious interval, and the consummation of your's, and your dear husband's hopes, the means of bringing you both nearer to himself, and shewing you of the very secret, and covenant consolations, attractions, and establishment, which he manifests to, and confers on, those who closely, diligently, and confidently wait on him ! It is the greatest privilege of husband and wife, both jointly, and individually, thus to wait on him. May you be the joyful mother of a child, that shall be a signal blessing to you both, and an ornament of the Church of Christ !

Your affectionate,

N.

LETTER XXII.

ON THE DEATH OF AN INFANT.

January, 1841.

MY DEAR —.

I was hurried yesterday after the arrival of your note, and when I could have written a few lines, I was

occupied. "The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."* May you be enabled with increasing power to realize this! You shall find light springing up in darkness, and joy growing out of sorrow. It is sweet in one view, that the Lord should appoint, that a redeemed one should call on you on its way to heaven, and that, as an heavenly Father would allow no longer delay, he would in that short interval honour you, and your husband, with the nearest relation to, and temporary hospitality for, this speedy traveller towards the blessed world. This has indeed made a parting necessary, which would not otherwise have occurred. But "it is the Lord:" and we cannot for a moment think, that there can be any deviation from a plan of infinite wisdom and love. May he teach all he intends to teach by this dispensation, and shape the effect, inspire the beneficial influence, and in his due time fulfil to you his word to Peter,—“What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.” † ‘Behind a frowning Providence, he hides a smiling face.’ ‡ May he abound in blessings to you all, “above what we can ask or think?”

Your affectionate Uncle,
N.

LETTER XXIII.

Ipswich, July, 27, 1842.

MY DEAR ———.

I have just been speaking to the bereaved ones, § of Him, who presents himself to the faith of his people,

* Dent. xxxiii. 27. † John xiii. 7. ‡ Olney Hymns, b. iii. xv.

§ Referring to a congregation just bereaved of their faithful pastor.

as "binding up the broken in heart."* I observe by the way, the step in advance, which he takes in the quotation of the prophecy in the synagogue at Nazareth! There it is—"to heal the broken-hearted;" sweetly intimating, that where He undertakes a cure, He always effects it. Where He "binds up," He infallibly "heals" effectually. Oh! for a realizing view, for an habitual view by faith of this infinite all-sufficiency; lending, giving itself to us embodied in inexpressible tenderness and sympathy; watching over us with incessant care—marking every step, and planning every thing for every hour. As you are doing for your little ones on the journey, so does He on the journey of life. And I suppose, notwithstanding all your care, and all your indulgence of them, before they get to —, they will cry a little, or at least look a little grave, at some incident which they did not expect; "as though some strange thing had happened unto them." They had a different notion of the journey, and expected unmixed enjoyment. And some such mistakes are made by the children of our Heavenly King, which he sanctifies, and overrules for good. One thing I know, that I desire to be inexpressibly ashamed of myself after all my corrections; and one thing I know not,—what I might have been, had I not been so corrected. I am now approaching the end of my paper, which, if it had been longer, I should hardly have had resolution perhaps to begin; and I feel pretty convincing proof, I should not have had head to finish it. Give my love, and express my gratitude, so far as words can, to your dear husband. He has left a monument in my heart and parish, which I trust will, by the Lord's blessing, be perpetu-

* Is. lxi. 1.

ated to eternity. Kiss the dear babes with my love to them, and believe me,

Affectionately yours,
N.

LETTER XXIV.

ON THE DANGEROUS ILLNESS OF A CHILD.

Ipswich, Oct. 1842.

DEAREST ——.

I shall endeavour to snatch a few minutes to write to you, and at the outset beg, that you will send me a single line on receiving this, if the dear child be still spared, to say how she is.

Amid all the suggestions, which float in one's mind in connexion with the trials of our friends, I will, at present, endeavour to put this foremost. *Study*, and as you study it, *pray*, that you may grow in the experimental knowledge and influence of the love of God. I think I have found, that it has principally been communicated and received in seasons of trial. To dwell in a way of contemplative meditation on this announcement of Scripture—"God is love"—is a very promising method of struggling with those feelings, which, in every variety of doubt and question, of pungent sorrow, weakness, and weariness—as respects both the duties of life and our spiritual pilgrimage—assault the mind under trials. Boldly march up to such a statement—to take it into consideration with the thought—"This is the truth of God. Let me put off all that cleaves to the mind, coming out of the hurry

of daily employment, and out of the unbelieving suggestions, which Satan, by advantage of that hurry, injects into the mind, when there is no time to examine them, and scarce strength to dismiss them. Let me endeavour, in dependence on Divine help, to strip these off—"The place whereon I stand is holy ground." Then if we endeavour to take the Scriptures with earnest prayer, and gather as many references as we can to support and illustrate—"God is love"—we shall (if it be done in the spirit of prayer, analyzing the character and conduct of God, as a loving Father in redemption and providence) find, probably, that the frame of our minds is improved, and our feelings lightened; but above all—that our principles and grounds of faith are strengthened. Then if, as opportunity is presented, we apply these general views of God as love, and the support it receives from other portions of the word; we shall be prepared to come to more exact search into each of the different suggestions presented to us, and be provided with the specific application of the general truth, which each calls for, in order to its exposure and rejection. This course, under trial, would serve to confirm the word in our minds against every temptation. Whereas the assent given at other times, is often irrespective of those difficulties, which are hereafter to assail us, and so eventually no provision against them.

Dear —— is with me till to-morrow, and we have united at family worship in prayer for you. Renewed love to your husband.

Your affectionate uncle

J. T. N.

The Lord's best blessings be with you all!

LETTER XXV.

Ipswich, Dec. 16, 1842.

MY DEAR ———,

I often lament not writing a single line, when I cannot do more. May the Lord in his infinite love be continually present with you, especially in your approaching trial! Keep close to the persuasion, that the Lord acquits, and accepts you as a believer in Christ. Dwell on the Scriptures, which assure you of this. Revert again and again to this, and to the impossibility, that the Divine word should be broken. Plead it in prayer: Then let "your strength be in quietness, and in confidence." Give yourself up to "rejoicing in Christ Jesus," and leaving yourself with a wise composure to the love and management of your heavenly Father. To him, I commend you and yours. My love to your dear husband.

Your affectionate Uncle

N.

LETTER XXVI

THIS AND THE FOLLOWING LETTERS (XXVI.—XXXI.) Poured out the rich consolation of the Gospel during a season of special trial.

Ipswich, April 22, 1843.

DEAREST ———.

Now for the application of those blessed principles, of which the value can never be known, but by the

use of them. Now for the answer to all the prayers, that were put on the file for you, before your infant mind had begun to expand, and which in long succession have been added to since, as well as to all you have sent to the throne of grace, since you knew the truth; and all that you and your husband have offered up together, since the Lord sanctified and joined you together in marriage. Our Gospel principles, however clearly believed, are, when only received by faith, like the separate ivory letters, that you give your children. It is the Lord's marking our path, appointing our experience, and regulating all circumstances, that guides us to spell out *wisdom, faithfulness, power, sovereignty, forbearance, chastening*, and enables us marvellously to discover, that the whole of this spiritual alphabet is in a manner virtually included in the word Love. I can have no doubt, that the astounding, desolating Providence, which has changed my whole path of life, and current of feeling, has had this object, and shall terminate in the accomplishment of it. Dark and inscrutable as it still seems to me, it will in some way appear to be an answer to my prayers for more faith and more love. These things are not accidents. They do "not spring out of the dust;" nor are they less indispensable, than those other events of life, which spontaneously, and without examination, fill our mouths with joy, and our tongues with singing. They "all work *together*;" and we may confidently say, that the sweet without the bitter could not alone accomplish the blessing, which our loving Father intends for us. But I must be content with this scrap, dear——. I have been much pressed and encumbered; and both here and elsewhere the afflictions of friends have called for the poor attempts at alleviation, which I have been enabled to offer. My love to your dear

husband. The Lord bless you continually and the little ones !

Your affectionate Uncle,
N.

LETTER XXVII.

Ipswich, Aug. 22, 1844.

MY DEAR — —.

I know not whether our precious H— is with you still. If she be, give my most grateful love to her for the gratification of her letter to me, and say—it will be a high treat to have a little more, when, (and certainly not, except when) it can be, without impediment or inconvenience. But from you, dear — —, I may make the same request without hesitation ; for I never think about who wrote last. I only know that I am glad to find myself writing to you once more, and shall be delighted to see your autograph again. Tell me about your husband, your parish, and very particularly about yourself. I hope you grow in simplicity of faith. If you do not, remember—nothing can arise with such destruction to your comfort from any source, as from that source. And if you are growing in simplicity of faith, I know, as sure as if I saw you, that you are “filled with joy and peace in believing.” You can then say of every thing you see, and every thing you experience inwardly—“All is well :” “It is the Lord ; let him do what seemeth him good.” And just the same with what you want of him, as well as what he does for and to you. Tell him what

you want—no matter what. Remind him of—“ My God shall supply all your need ”*—and of his glory as bound up in the fulfilment of it ; and so leave it in his hands, whether secular or spiritual—Husband, child, parish, servants, or your own heart. How inconsistent, that we should be at ease, while things are going on a little straight ; and then all dependence the moment a cross makes its appearance ! What right had we to conclude things would go on well, because they had done so ? The moment is coming, when the sun, which has risen every morning for nearly 6000 years, will rise no more. But if we are walking with God, then all is well, all is well regulated and provided for. Then dear ——, put every thing into his hands every moment. “ Cast every care upon him,” and say—‘ There ! that is disposed of ’—and repeat it, till you are satisfied it is true. For it will return again and again. If you are determined to believe, depend on it, unbelief will make it sufficiently troublesome to you. But endeavour to empty the mind, to relieve, to unburthen the mind as often as ever it is loaded and cramped with anything. And having exerted this act of faith, stretch out the limbs of your soul, and feel that you are at rest. Look to the covenant, and see that the Lord hath provided bountifully for all possible wants : and take the comfort of it. Then your posture will be rest, and your pillow easy : and every time this exertion of faith is made, the rest will be more conscious, and the repose longer, till it comes to be as complete and habitual, as in the present state is attainable.

Your affectionate,
J. T. N.

* Phil. iv. 19.

LETTER XXVIII.

Ipswich, Oct. 11, 1844.

You know, dear child, that I am now trembling, when I think of the stringency of exhortation, which I employed, to urge you to confident dependence on the all-sufficiency and unchangeableness of Divine love; the certainty of the promises, and the wisdom of all the ways, which our covenant God takes to accomplish them. I have spoken with that human earnestness of expression, which too often falls from me. But, dear ——, the truth is not less certain, for my awkward manner of putting it, that “whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.”* But one thing I do feel powerfully. I am ashamed of having attempted to teach you, whom the Lord is teaching with his own hand, and by his own unfathomable dispensation. Pardon my meddling. Indeed I am persuaded, the Lord will not allow you to suffer loss by me; and I pray, that he may make whatever I may now or hereafter say acceptable and profitable to you. This will be my earnest desire, and our Lord’s compliance with it a rich indulgence.

Let me stop to say, that, if there be any thing, from the high privilege of speaking from my Master a word in season, to the meanest trifle, that can contribute to your alleviation, let me know; and it shall be done to the best of my power. And now may the Lord grant, that whatever he shall, by his grace, acting through his inscrutable providence, teach either of us,

* Heb. xii. 6.

it may by the same grace be made not only individually but mutually profitable ; and that we may not (as is too often the case,) have faith enough to endure ; yet be less diligent in obtaining that instruction, consolation, yea, edification for future life, which every trial is sent to accomplish ! I have ventured to speak in the language of teaching to you. May the Lord pardon my own unteachable heart, which, after a life of most deep, solemn lessons, and the most tender parental discipline, is no more even yet “brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ !” May my spirit be with your spirit, while enduring the trials of nursing, while breathing every minute to that throne, where our Brother and our Lord for ever intercedes, with irresistible prevalence ! To his grace and tenderness, to his sympathy, untired zeal, and never-to-be defeated skill, I commit, and commend you and your dear husband. All looks very dark now ; but this is my dependence, that *all*, howsoever and whatsoever, shall end in his glory and our benefit. And the seed of God’s dispensations is very often like the natural seed in the ground. The Lord is pleased to make use of our endeavours, but without letting us know how, or what is to be the nature of the result of the means and materials we deal with. In general we are to be his agents to do good ; and he employs our combined faculties, mental and affectionate, for this purpose. And we think that what we have to employ for this purpose shall be carried on to its end, and produce that end conformably to the affections which are called forth, and the understanding which is employed. But while we are going on, and waiting for the springing up of something like what we had sown, he shews us he is going to produce an abundant harvest, but in another shape—affliction, temptation, loss, cross. But in propor-

tion often to the difference of the result from our expectations, is the richness of the increase ; and we find that “ we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we might learn not to trust in ourselves, but in God that raiseth the dead ; who hath delivered, and doth deliver ; in whom we trust that he will yet deliver.” *

Let us then come back to the point from which we set out—that “ whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth,” and that “ if we endure chastening, God dealeth with us as with his children.” Let us remember, that he hath not limited this to a certain quantity of chastening. He alone is judge of that. “ Ye have heard the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.” † Yet who could have formed this judgment of the Lord’s dealings with Job, if he had not waited to “ see the end of it ?” May the Lord grant, dear —, that you may be enabled to wait even to the end of the Lord’s dispensation, which you are now under ! May he give you grace to do so ; grace according to your need ! May you wait *on* him, and find that you “ renew your strength,” ‡ and so be enabled to wait *for* him. And oh, what cause have we to say—“ I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me !” “ The Lord God shall make my darkness to be light.” § So even a sense of our sin drives faith closer to the Lord, and makes it shew itself to be faith, and compels us to acknowledge, that there is light behind the darkest clouds, and that in due time it will appear. Meantime all this will

* 2 Cor. i. 9, 10.

† James v. 11.

‡ Is. xl. 31.

§ Micah vii. 9. Ps. xviii. 28.

soon be over, and he will come to take us to himself. My love in Christ Jesus be with you.

Affectionately yours,

J. T. N.

LETTER XXIX.

Ipswich, Oct. 18, 1844.

DEAREST ———,

May the Lord direct me to a word that he will bless! For myself, I feel weak as water, and more likely to do harm than good. But he knoweth and can bring good out of evil, and strength out of weakness. I shall turn to nothing of appearance or probabilities, though from the last letter I think there is no increase of unfavourable symptoms. But let us go at once to the simplicity of unquestionable truth and fact, for that is the one centre, from whence all hope radiates in whatever direction. Here then it is—"From everlasting to everlasting thou art God."* This secures every thing. His infinite attributes and perfections secure the incessant and eternal welfare of all for whom he undertakes. Nothing can be planned an atom below the perfection of wisdom and benevolence, infinite in degree and kind. Nothing can fail, when planned, of being executed, which such wisdom and goodness can by the assistance of infinite power, patience, perseverance, and operative skill, carry into effect. And all this is previously engaged, and actually at work every moment for every believer, just as much

* Ps. xc. 2.

as if there were nothing else in the universe thought of, or practically attended to—and this with a minuteness, that suffers no occurrence relating to that individual to take place unawares, or without being directed ultimately to his benefit, his highest, his eternal enjoyment. May the Lord bless this thought to you, dearest child; or else it is in vain that I suggest it! and may you be enabled to realize the presence, power, and grace of the Saviour; ordering, selecting, arranging every circumstance of your trial, both to yourself and to your dear patient, and to pray, that he would provide and secure by his infinite wisdom and all-sufficient blessing on every step and every moment, the eternal result; while you anticipate the same in the confidence of faith and hope! A thought just crosses my mind, which has often occurred to me in connexion with a passage in one of the Psalms for this day—“He will cover thee with his feathers; and under his wings shalt thou trust; his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.”* It has been a grateful and encouraging thought several times to me, to consider the broad wing of the Divine protection, as investing the whole of the redeemed at every moment. And this connexion and distribution of thought is very productive of edifying reflections. If I am separated to ever such a distance from a dear Christian friend, I know that we are only under distinct feathers of the same comprehensive wing, the same impregnable defence. Not only does he gather his people, “as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings,” so that they are continually near to the heart of his infinite and eternal love; but they are safe there. The enemy cannot, like the kite, destroy both the dam and the brood;

* Ps. xci. 4.

but his wing is an impregnable defence. It is "the munition of rocks," more insurmountable than even the walls of Paradise; and their life—their eternal life—with all their blessings—is not in their own hands, as Adam's was—but in His—and "out of those hands, none can pluck them." "Shall tribulation or affliction &c. ? Nay in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." * Again—another thought, arising out of a further pursuit of the idea I have adverted to, is the mutual benefit that believers derive from each other. Am I low or discouraged? Then let me remember, that I am within the same refuge, that the child of God known or unacquainted with me, of whom I have the greatest confidence, ever did, or ever can enjoy. Let me enumerate his securities in the covenant of grace, his provision in the promises; and however our feelings or circumstances may differ, they are all mine as much as they are his. Or am I rejoicing in the Lord? Then so far as I hope my friend is really one of the Lord's children, I have the delight of knowing, that whatever appearances may be, he or she is as safe as I, or any other within the same sacred and unassailable enclosure. Then how much am I interested in praying for them, not only in the interest I take in their welfare, but for the brightness, which the hope of it reflects on my own confidence for myself! My earnest affectionate remembrances to dear ——. The Lord be abundantly with you all!

Your affectionate Uncle,

N.

* John x. 28. Rom. viii. 35—37.

LETTER XXX.

I must attempt a line, dearest child, because, though I know I cannot say one word, nor relieve one feeling, I know who can, and I know—Oh unspeakable condescension ! that he has not suffered me always to speak altogether in vain. The word that crossed my mind, when I was about taking up my pen, was this—“ I know their sorrows.”* What is human friendship or consolation ? But to be able to realize the sympathy of that “ friend, that sticketh closer than a brother,” is light in darkness, and joy in the depths of anxiety and sorrow. I have heard the report which arrived this morning ; and to human eye it presents only discouragement. But I know that to the Lord all things are just as possible now ; and therefore in poor weak faith, but yet in faith—“ the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.”† I confidently leave him in those hands, which do all things according to the counsels of infinite love and wisdom ; and there I leave your dearest ——. What an incalculable privilege ! When I cannot, no, not if I had the whole world at my disposal, do an atom towards helping his sickness, or your sorrow ; I can commend you to him, who wept for both the sisters of Lazarus, and who is as able to raise your dear husband from his sick bed, as Lazarus from the tomb. Oh ! the privilege of being able to say—“ Lord, behold he whom thou lovest is sick.”‡ But we must leave our wishes and wills in his hand, as well as our faith and hope. May he prepare your mind in his own unsearch-

* Ex. iii. 7.

† Heb. xi. 1.

‡ I John xi. 9.

able skill, and with his own inconceivable tenderness, for what lies hid in his eternal counsels! "Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." * Oh! could my heart but be going out to meet him, and to realize that which I know must be, (however I am ignorant of any other future event)—then how well, how suitably, how edifyingly should I be prepared to meet everything that occurs in this changeable world! Sure of meeting all my dear Christian friends, though setting out at different times and by different conveyances; the immediate objects in the world around me would be no more to me, than the trees and hedges in going to London; and even those events, which shake and alarm me and mine while on the road, would only be like some rough jolt in a carriage, the passengers in which could not be overthrown by the way, nor fail of arriving at their destined end. If we are brought to that terminus sooner than we expected, we are sure that our God has done all that he intended with us, and by us, and for us. "Not one thing has failed of all the good" that his promises engaged, without any unseemly, crowding, or inconvenient hurry. Nay, more—we may think we discover something, which we consider to be the very thing intended; and we may be mistaken; and we may never know, till the final developement of the secrets of all hearts, why I wrote, and you received, this letter. But I have no doubt, that, desiring to do His will, and "to speak a word in season to the weary," he will not suffer the endeavour to be wholly in vain; and that he has put the thought of doing it in my heart. May its arrival, if it do nothing else, send up your thoughts once more "to the hills, from whence

* Heb. x. 37.

‡ Josh. xziii. 14.

cometh your help ;” though in the expressions themselves you should not find the specific encouragement, that suits the present state of your mind ! Sometimes the very inability of any human help, the strong feeling of it, and the suspension for the present of the satisfaction we have sometimes derived from human sources, that have led us step by step to our heavenly Father, drive us to his bosom in a moment, as a racket does a tennis ball. Well, dearest child, however it be, with the love and prayers of C. and H., with whom I am for a few days, to the tenderest consolations, all sufficient provisions, and infallible directions of our heavenly Father, I commend you and your dear patient. My love to him.

Affectionately yours,
J. T. N.

LETTER XXXI.

Nov. 7, 1844.

I put myself in the Lord's hands, dear ——, to drop a word to you, and pray that, by his grace, it may be a word in season. Yours (just read) has a word in season to me—namely, that I must learn to submit my will to the Lord's will : and that I must in all things desire, as my greatest privilege, that his will, wisdom, and tenderness, may even take place of mine, guide, control them, and bring them to their best accomplishment, to give me a “desired end.”

Oh ! how gracious he is to take our wishes, and shape them according to his own infinite wisdom, and his stable and prospective counsel, seeing the end from

the beginning ! How sweet, when we realize it ! (and what is there, but our own wayward hearts to prevent our realizing it ?) when we can give ourselves consciously to him, put our hand into his, and feel persuaded, that he is leading us from hour to hour, from event to event all through the day ! What tedious discouraging work would it be to me to write this, if I did not believe, that God is guiding me, directing, controlling, suggesting. (I might otherwise do harm.) Yes—amidst all my dulness and weakness, there is something, I doubt not, that is to be an ingredient in the “all things,” which are at present (as they are always) “working together” for the consolation and ultimate blessedness of you and your dear husband, even in these feeble lines. Neither you nor I may perceive it ; we shall see at last, that “not one good thing has failed of all” that we were capable of doing, or being, or accomplishing. We have prayed for you both, dearest child, in the congregation, and in a large assembly at my school-rooms twice last week ; and we meet again there at 12 to-morrow, if it be the Lord’s will. Oh ! how my heart would leap to hear, that the Lord is pleased to vouchsafe the answer, that our feelings are waiting for !* But, after all, our best privilege is to say—“*Not my will, but thine be done.*” And though we should have to say it in pain for a few short days or years, how shall we rejoice, and shout at last, that we were not permitted to choose for ourselves ! We are as little able to keep and manage our happiness even on earth for ourselves, as the first Adam to be the depository of his spiritual life.

Therefore put yourself and your dear husband into his hands, with an unshaken confidence, and an equally

* This answer was most graciously vouchsafed—a remarkable encouragement to “prayer made without ceasing of the Church.” Acts xii. 5.

flexible will.—“The peace of God which passeth all understanding. keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” My love to him.

Affectionately yours,
J. T. N.

LETTER XXXII.

Ipswich, Oct. 26, 1844.

Thanks, dearest — —, for sparing me even a minute under your present circumstances. I blush and am ashamed, when I say, I would have written to you, if I had been able (for what are my demands—though neither few nor unimportant—compared with yours?) but though I have longed and wished to write, I have scarce been able to get through the ordinary demands of the day. But what can I do, now that my pen is in my hand?—Of myself nothing, absolutely nothing, more than the pen could without me in marking the paper, can I do in devising, commanding, or impressing what those marks communicate to you. But I know there is One, who can make “his strength perfect even in such weakness.” And desiring to put myself unresistingly into His hand, (as the pen obeys the course of my will, and the movement of my fingers,) and desiring that His may be all the glory of the result; I do trust, I shall not write altogether in vain, though I am writing as fast as I can, to get a little time afterwards for my sermon. Dear child, you say—‘It is impossible to tell what I have gone through. The iniquities of past days have come as a cloud between me and the Lord. And He who alone

could help me in the time of my greatest need, &c.' Even in passing through the shallows, and with every human comfort, and through abundant mercy not shut out from the communications of the Lord's grace, yet was I for months in the spring and summer, "made to possess the iniquities of my youth;" and, while outwardly I was mixing in all the daily routine around me, I was living in continual conflict, partly arising from the accusations of conscience, partly from the remembrance of the repose and confidence of domestic friendship I once enjoyed; and living in an interior world, that had not a resemblance or connection with that which surrounded me. But "God was and is faithful, and did not, and will not suffer me to be tempted above what He will enable me to bear, but has made, and will make, a way to escape, that we may be able to bear" * all that occurs on the way, and even the last struggle—and "to stand before the Son of man." What is the result, to which our dear Heavenly Father and our blessed Saviour are by the Spirit, which proceedeth from the Father and the Son, conducting us!—To this, "Who forgiveth *all* thy sins." † But for the present many of us cannot come quite up to that *all*, though we come very near it, often seem to touch it, even get a temporary hold, but do not permanently keep that hold. Let us try not to suspect Him any longer on this *one* cardinal point, and then our whole course will be easy, yea delightful. Then we shall not have a doubt that *all* is *love*—our struggle with unbelief not excepted. Then all will be as unmixed blessing to faith now, as it will be to sense and feeling in heaven. Let us try, and go about it, as a thing (edification, "building up ourselves on our

* 1 Cor. x. 13.

† Ps. ciii. 3.

most holy faith") which is to be done by laying a brick or two a day in a building—but in *confidence*, that if we go on with faith, and in faith, we cannot but succeed. It may be years before we reach what we are capable of attaining and enjoying in this life. But one thing *is* possible—We may advance, however slowly, towards a full and abiding assurance, and habitual assimilation to the will of God, when once we have clearly seen that it is our promised privilege, and that we cannot fail to obtain it, if we persevere. This once believed and kept as an habitual article of faith, should never afterwards be questioned—not the *principle*. There are fresh assaults of unbelief about particular points, and there will be plenty of functional infirmities and diseases in the exercise of faith. But let not the principle be questioned—that “he that believeth shall be saved;” * and, provided we are not giving way to spiritual indolence, we may rest on the thought, that notwithstanding the incursions of unbelief into our souls, “He abideth faithful.” † He cannot fail of the accomplishment of his promise, without “denying himself.” He has let us know that to be “faithful and just, He must forgive the sins” of those, who confess them, and “cleanse them from all unrighteousness” ‡ The Lord in his glorious and gracious all-sufficiency be with you!

Your affectionate,
J. T. N.

* Mark xvi. 16.

† 2 Tim. ii. 13.

‡ 1 John i. 9.

LETTER XXXIII.

Ipswich, Jan. 7. 1845.

MY DEAR ———,

I have been a sad correspondent lately ; and I know that I must impute it partly to want of method and economizing precious time. But I must plead also, that I have a great deal to do, and not a great deal of strength to do it. And method—that is in the only valuable sense of it,—practical method—(for vain is the plan, which there is not the ability to perform) depends on equable strength ; for when that fails, the most judicious plan, and the planner—“the horse and his rider” both fall down together. However, having begun, let us dismiss complaint, and enter upon the work. My thoughts for some days have been, though coldly and imperfectly, often recurring to that wondrous love, which brought the Son of God down from heaven to the cross ; and I have been thinking what Christians we should be, if it were more clearly revealed to our minds, and more warmly impressed on our hearts. How would every moment be occupied with conscious delight, and each incident and thought of every day minister fuel for the heavenly flame ! Then with what delight should we attend the cottages of the poor, the sick, and the ignorant, and pour the balm of consolation into their wounded hearts, and empty souls ! And how should we ourselves “be watered, while watering others.” Then should we see the path of life laid clear and straight before us, conscious that whatever appears in the shape of obstacle, has indeed no obstructive power, for love, Almighty love, will bear us triumphantly through to the new

Jerusalem at the end of it. Then indeed would all appalling objects be swept away, as we approach them, and we should happily discover, that they had borrowed their formidable appearance from the distance at which they were viewed, and the dimness of the optic power of faith; perceiving the visible hindrances, but not discerning the invisible guidance and protection. Then we should go on with our work of faith and labour of love to others, and should find that the capital of love in our own souls, thus circulated and traded with, was continually increasing, and we growing more "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light," in the exact proportion, in which the course of time is bringing us nearer and nearer to it. O, to be filled with this love, and at the same time surrounded by it, as the atmosphere we breath, and the refreshing medium in which we live and act! While it consumes every corruption of the heart within, and brings "every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ," how does it outwardly renew our strength, provoke our diligence, and make even labour our refreshment. Well; we want nothing to accomplish this, but more faith. "We have" — says the apostle, "known and believed the love that God hath to us." "He that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God, and dwelleth in God, and God in him."* We need nothing in order to know this love, but to open our eyes to the pages of Scripture, and the history of redemption, and to look into our own experience, and see the transcript from the volume of inspiration copied out there, and the designs of eternal love there exemplified in undeniable facts. What has not love done for us? But a little while ago our souls were lying in their blood, and it bid us live." † We

* 1 John iv. 16, 8.

† Ezek. xvi. 6.

were “dead in trespasses and sins ;” and it “quickened us together with Christ, and raised us up together, and made us sit with Him in heavenly places.”* Now then, there remains only the consummation of the plan, the accomplishment of which has been begun, and already carried on so far in spite of hindrances, which seemed insurmountable. Now we have only to wait patiently. The difficulties are done away, if we do. We have “known” this love, “believe” its undeniable doings for us and in us, and wait by faith for its completion of its work. “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God, by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.”† If in His humiliation on the cross “He spoiled principalities and powers,” and took us out of their hands as the fruit of His victory ; much more will He keep us from their malice, now He has conquered them, and bring us through all their opposition to His heavenly kingdom.

Love to —,

Affectionately yours,

J. T. N.

LETTER XXXIV.

Ipswich, July 30, 1846.

Well, dear —, how is it with you ! I begin to find it more and more difficult to write a few lines both from the pressing multitude of demands in general, and from the conflicting claims of different

* Ephes. ii. 5, 6.

† Rom. v. 10.

friends. Do what I will, I cannot give to one hour the duration of two; and as I am in debt to more dear friends than I know how to acknowledge by pen and ink; some must be answered at one time, and some at another: and it will also not unfrequently happen, that particular circumstances will enforce a continuous correspondence with some for a certain period, while other friends must for the time be reserved for another opportunity. Certain it is, that I have been long wishing to write to you. I hope dear —, that the late mercies of the Lord to you have been carrying on the history of your life and of his loving kindness, and that this era has been accompanied with those solemn recollections, and lively gratitude, and renewal of your dedication, and devotion of yourself, body, and soul to him, and to his service, by which former similar periods have been marked; and by an advance upon them in affection and deliberation.

I believe you do, as I do, assist your memory in communion with yourself and with the Lord, by your pen. Though it be done ever so imperfectly, yet if it be persevered in, (and even that I do not mean with any thing like mechanical continuity, but) according and enlarging upon important events, and the more interesting periods of mental history, it can hardly be without benefit, nor the omission without serious loss. I so often find, when I do turn back to past records of the reflections and prayers connected, something which I had entirely forgotten, and ought not to have forgot. Above all commune with God. You never can get through the duties, escape the dangers, or secure the qualified enjoyments of this short and chequered existence; but by bringing every thing—not now and then—but habitually, daily, under the

Divine eye, and afresh inviting his examination, imploring his direction and assistance, in every thing you are doing and are about to do. Then you will go forward with the confidence of Almighty patronage supplied by inexhaustible bounty. Dear —— is with me now, apparently in the last stage of decline. It is the Lord's great indulgence to be permitted to minister "the cup of cold water," and to hear the words of those, who are on the brink of another world.

Again I beg you to write, and with my love to your husband and children, believe me I feel it a real privilege after so long an interval, once more to sign myself,

Your affectionate Uncle,

J. T. N.

LETTER XXXV.

UPON AN ENTRANCE ON A NEW AND IMPORTANT SPHERE
OF MINISTRY.

Ipswich, Aug. 30, 1842.

MY DEAR ——.

A shower, which prevents me from taking a walk which I had thought of, will enable me in this instance to answer your letter, or at least to acknowledge it at the time, when, if possible, every letter ought to be answered on the day, and as near as may be, at the time of the day when you receive it. I do not mean, that letters can thus follow each other in continual succession. But in order that they should have any thing like what they are intended to have—a given relation to conversation, communication of

thoughts, wants, and feelings, they should go in pairs, and each act of intercourse should, if possible, consist of a letter and an answer returned as soon as possible, while the interest of the contents of the letter is fresh on the mind of the reader, and he can consequently write so much under the influence of it, that his reply or observation will apply to his correspondent's points of remark, or record, before they have faded from his recollection. I shall be truly gratified to hear, that the children are recovering the shaking and disordering effects of so long a journey. They are, as you say, in the Lord's hands; and this is a consolation, when the head is quiet enough to contemplate it, that should leave, and—when that quiet is granted, I think I may say, does leave no question on any subject.

I rejoice with you—I praise with you—at the reception the Lord has given you among His people. This must be a great and animating encouragement to proceed with the determination, composure, and enterprise of one, whose “feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.” ‘*Macte novâ virtute.*’* The Lord, I trust, had prepared the hearts of some of them to cleave to Him, and to you. May He give you continually to rise to the occasion, and to rise higher in conception and exertion within prudent limits, as the field will widen, and the objects increase before you! May the Lord give you the spirit of wisdom, “of love, power, and of a sound mind,” and strengthen your hands, and comfort your heart! The Lord has shewn his determination to set you on board a vessel, where you must be at work continually, to keep yourself afloat; and I expect, that by calling you to an arduous work, He has manifested his design to make

* Go on as you have begun. Virg. *Æn.* ix. 641.

you an instrument of some considerable, some more than usual amount of good.

Attempt great things; expect great things; pray for great things. In prayer and patient waiting, you will find your difficulties gradually and materially lessened, and your helpers rendered more effectual, or replaced by others. I must now, with love to —, and the children, “commend you all to the Lord, and to the word of his grace.”

Yours affectionately,
J. T. N.

LETTER XXXVI.

ON THE PROSPECT OF RESTORATION TO HIS MINISTRY,
AFTER SERIOUS ILLNESS.

Ipswich, Sept. 18, 1843.

MY DEAR —,

How truly gratifying your letter was to me. I cannot easily tell you. To know at once that you were sufficient^{ly} restored to be able to write, and that you should have affectionately indulged me with so early an exercise of your recovered powers. The thought of yourself has been associated in the interval that has elapsed, since our mutual friends and myself began to carry you in our hearts to a throne of grace, with our most interesting exercises of faith and supplication. Much more has this interest been excited by the clear and consoling answers that we have received;* so that besides our personal anxiety for yourself, your case has called into action all that by grace we possess of susceptibility, of the value of time, and of eternity, to the heirs of salvation. God has indeed thus put a

* See note, p. 120.

stamp of consecration upon Christian attachment, such as one would always wish to have it distinguished by. It is, however, only in such striking instances of his preparing the hearts of his people, and his ears to hear them, that the distinction stands with the same prominence. It is no small additional satisfaction to have these feelings confirmed and sanctioned by your own communication, and by your lively impressions of the Divine interposition. I had heard this indeed before, and should have anticipated it, if I had not heard. But it is a more sensible gratification to see it in your own hand writing. Though I can do nothing to add weight to these impressions, yet I delight to add my testimony to your persuasion, that no time is lost during your present state of inaction; but that He, who "ordereth all things after the counsel of His own will," is by his dealings storing your mind with the most valuable experience, to be hereafter laid out in the glorifying himself in your own and in other's souls; that (as it is written) your "affliction, though not joyous but grievous," may eventually work "the peaceable fruits of righteousness." How does that prayer of Peter lay hold on our hearts, when called to the recollection of the ways, in which our precious Lord is pleased to exercise us.—"Now the God of all grace, who has called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus; after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To Him be glory, and dominion for ever and ever, amen."* And as in all this an heavenly Father is exercising His paternal love and wisdom; so, it is strengthening the heads and hearts of your ministerial brethren, to see you manifesting your conviction, that He is dealing with you as with a son, bringing you up for His

* 1 Pet. v. 10, 11.

service, as long as He appoints for you on earth (and may He grant you to build up His Church, and come at length to the termination of your labours like a shock of corn in its season!) and also for communion with Him for time and in eternity. And again, I rejoice to receive in your own hand writing, the assurance—"Hitherto the Lord has helped me."

To your kind enquiries after myself—I have great cause for thankfulness. I get on lamely from many causes: but the Lord is pleased on the other hand to grant me great alleviations, by which, under His grace, He enables me to fight against the impediments and burdens of weakness and depression, and to go on with some little portion of the work of the ministry. It is an indulgence indeed to be favoured with an answer to that prayer—"Take not the word of thy truth *utterly* out of my mouth."* And I hope we are not without proof, that He gives testimony to the end of His grace in the ministration of my brethren and myself. But I must stop here.

Very affectionately yours,

J. T. N.

LETTER XXXVII.

TO A NIECE, ON HER SETTLEMENT IN THE FAMILY OF A
CHRISTIAN MINISTER.

Ipswich, Sept. 18, 1837.

MY DEAR ———.

I beg you to be assured of what is really and literally the truth, that I am, notwithstanding my appa-

* Ps. cxix. 43.

rently ungrateful silence, most truly sensible of your kindness in writing to me. And I should not say half of what I ought to say, if I stopped there. You have interested me throughout in your narrative; and, what is better than all the rest, have finished by leading me to persuasion, which gives me great satisfaction and consolation on your behalf. I mean that I hope you have been favoured of the Lord to find a situation, where you have every advantage for living and walking with Him; and that you are actually endeavouring to do so. I am the more comforted with the thought of this, because I hope that both your circumstances, and your desire to improve them to the Lord's glory, and the benefit of your never dying soul, are an answer to prayers, which your dear aunt, and myself, and other of your friends, have been offering upon your behalf. And in the same light I regard the arrangements of the Lord's providence for dear ——. May His abundant blessing rest upon you both! It will be greatly smoothing my path in the decline of life, if I may see both of you habitually engaged in serving the Lord, who bought us with his own blood, with your whole hearts and with your whole souls. I should delight in writing on these subjects to you both, but I have so much to do, and am so feeble, and slow in getting through all my engagements, that, instead of any leisure time, my arrears seem to increase, and I go weary and worn to bed every night, with my spirits exhausted, and my difficulties apparently increasing. Yet I would be thankful for being enabled to get on at all. I have just been laid by for a fortnight, most of which I was almost wholly useless, through the prevailing epidemic. But you may imagine how this stands in the way of writing letters, for which I have neither head, nor strength, nor time, nor spirits. But I would,

as I say, be thankful, and therefore, instead of wasting time in complaints, I would exhort you, dear —, to avail yourself to the utmost of the spiritual advantages which you enjoy. Do not task or oppress yourself with anything beyond your strength or spirits. The inevitable consequence will be weariness, distaste, and despondency, and intervals of indolence and discouragement, till conscience is goaded by the sense of neglect and past inaction, by another unreasonable and injudicious attempt at too great exertion. Draw out from experience, not imagination, a general scheme for your daily proceedings, as far as they can be fore-arranged, and secure such a portion of time daily for Scripture, meditation and prayer, as you find upon trial you require, and are benefitted by. And let your seasons for spiritual engagements be so selected, that they may be interwoven with the parts of the whole day. Especially be careful of the evening, not to suffer the mind to get away from God, lest, if you grow cold and uninterested from six to eight or nine o'clock, your endeavours be found in vain to get back again to any spiritual frame before you go to bed, (though the attempt at prayer may be all regularly gone through,) and you lie down without being able to commend yourself with composure and confidence into the blessed Redeemer's hands. Pray, read Scripture, and meditate, that you may be prepared to follow Christ, and walk with God. And then engage in all you afterwards do, as one who remembers having prayed, and who is waiting in faith for an answer. And again, I say, engage neither in act or plan beyond your strength. It is easy to extend your proceedings, if the Lord give you more strength. But walking with God by faith in Christ, and thankfully serving him with the little you have, you will grow in peace and tran-

quillity, and always welcome his providential appointments.

Your affectionate Uncle,
J. T. N.

LETTER XXXVIII.

ON HER APPROACHING MARRIAGE.

Ipswich, March 8, 1837.

MY DEAR ———,

I have wanted no earnestness of inclination to acknowledge your long and affectionate epistle, nor to express my cordial satisfaction at the contents of it. But I have been as usual immersed in engagements and infirmities. I shall now, though not much in a state of head for letter writing, delay no longer; for I am very unwilling you should be kept waiting any longer for the congratulations and suggestions, which, on so many interesting grounds, I wish to communicate with *all speed*, because with *all my heart*. It is indeed no common cause for thankfulness, that the Lord in His providence should see fit to place you in the honourable relation of an help-meet to a minister of His eternal truth, to introduce you to all the advantages which arise out of that relation, for hearing the Gospel perseveringly and connectedly stated, and enforced, and to all the demands and occasions, which are presented in the daily life of a Minister's partner, for the practical exemplification and adorning of the doctrines which you hear. These occasions are such as apply themselves to the most agreeable, as well as

Christian feelings of the renewed heart, and if I may so say, win you to the pursuit of duties, which bring so much kindness in disposition, and so much of the power of conferring kindness on others, into habitual and powerful action, as to present those duties in the shape of privilege and indulgence.

I do, dear ——, look up for you from time to time, in my poor way, to Him, on whom no suppliant waits in vain, to bless you, and make you a blessing. And I have good hope He will do so. Only cast your care upon Him. Reject vain fears, and unfounded apprehension. Resist nervous feelings, and attaching too much importance to things not absolutely matter of duty! and you will find the Lord will lead you on in the ‘noiseless,’ but useful and acceptable, ‘tenor of your way,’ and make His presence known to you, as He does not to the world. I rejoice very heartily to hear the state of your health, and of your soul. I perceive, indeed, that you have many complaints to make of your heart, and a thousand evils indwelling in our fallen nature. Never, I hope, shall we be satisfied with ourselves, till we are before the throne; and then only, because self-will be altogether swallowed up, and Christ will be All in all. Yet, while we complain, let us press forward amidst all difficulty, and however little we may perceive our progress. You thank the Lord for affliction. O what a wretch had I been without it! And what an unprofitable servant am I still! But it is written—“I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious.”* Pray for me, as in my poor way I do for you. Adieu, dear ——, may the richest blessings of our covenant God descend upon and abide with you!

Your affectionate Uncle,
J. T. N.

* Ex. xxxiii. 19.

LETTER XXXIX

Feb. 1, 1840.

DEAREST ——,

My sick and my sermons, nearly take up my whole disposable powers with the unavoidable intervening extras.

May the Lord be nigh unto you—much in communion with you! May His faithfulness, tenderness, power, grace and pity be brought home by His blessed Advocate, to your understanding, faith, feelings and affections, both susceptible and reactive! and may the new creation be carried on with life and prosperity in your soul, even as you see the natural creation, with which the Lord has honoured and blessed you, growing and increasing before your eyes!

Love to ——

Your affectionate Uncle,
J. T. N.

LETTER XL.

ON THE DEATH OF A CHILD.

Ipswich, Feb. 3, 1829.

MY DEAR ——,

I am grieved, and what shall I say? what a restless spoiler is death! Last spring, dear mother taken away, like the stately oak of our family plantation; and this year a rosebud, whose leaves were scarce un-

folded. I believe that in all that susceptibility suggests to make one linger on the bewitching attractiveness of sorrow towards its subject, there are perhaps not many, who are more naturally inclined to listen to its whispers than myself. I still dwell with a kind of spell-bound fixedness upon the removal of those, who are long since gone, and who yet never stood in the relation to me, which your dear first-born boy occupied with respect to yourself. This inventive sadness would ill fit me for a comforter, though it perhaps has a kind of sympathetic character, which the mourner loves. Yet even this has been attended with a result (if I do not altogether mistake the aspect and complexion, which it has pleased God in course of time to impart to my mind) which may perhaps give me some little claim to be heard, when suggesting the materials of consolation. Habitual sadness has, I think, been sanctified, to drive me more immediately to the only ground of comfort. I am compelled to take the simplest, most undeniable views of the truth at once, because there seems to me no choice but between the Bible in its simple literal truth, and some violent desperate step. How the world gets over these things, I am quite at a loss to conceive, and in some respects, the more so, as I remember well what the world was. Now then, my dear ——, what have *you* and *I* under sorrow—what refuge, what consolation, what indemnification? I would answer the question by asking another. Is it true, that “He bore our sins in His own body on the tree,” that “all power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth,” that He may be “Head over all things to His Church?” If then, the hands that were nailed to the cross for me, do now sway the sceptre of dominion over all things in heaven and earth, and under the earth, I know nothing can

happen but by His permission ; and I know that He will permit nothing, but what is for His glory and my good. And here I must stop. I cannot see the connection of His dispensations with the end to be answered by them. Perhaps what I know not now I may know hereafter. Mean time it is my privilege to believe it, and improve it to my comfort. Not that it will suppress the sigh, or dry the tear of sorrow at once. But in proportion as it is received into the heart by faith, it becomes a growing principle of solid, lasting comfort. And every view which the Scriptures give of the Redeemer, gives additional force to that encouraging word of His—"I, even I am He that comforteth thee."* Such for instance as the assurances given respecting His character and disposition towards us—In all our affliction He is afflicted. "He does not willingly afflict, but for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness." † What He says of His church collectively, is true of His proceedings respecting His people individually—"I will allure her into the wilderness, and will speak comfortably unto her." ‡ He withdraws us from the feeling of earthly satisfaction, that He may fix our hearts on Him. And then He "can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities." His tenderness at the grave of Lazarus, whom He was about so soon to restore to life, shews how entirely He is clothed with all the sweet sympathies of human nature, and greatly endears and attracts our confidence when we are under any trouble. May He, my dear friend, who is so able both to pity our infirmities, to comfort our sorrows, and above all, to sanctify them and bring good out of them, bless you and dear ——"with the favour that

* Is. li. 12. † Ib. lxiii. 9. Lam. iii. 33. Heb. xii. 10. ‡ Hos. ii. 14.

He beareth unto His people," support and console you under your present weight of trial, and eventually satisfy you, that "it is good for you to have been afflicted."* Our most affectionate love waits on you, and we shall not fail to entreat the God of all grace and consolation to preserve and bless you both.

Your affectionate

J. T. N.

LETTER XLII.

WRITTEN AFTER MRS. N'S DEATH, TO A NIECE, WHOSE HUSBAND WAS HER VALUABLE MEDICAL ATTENDANT AT A DISTANCE FROM HOME DURING A LONG PART OF HER LAST ILLNESS.

Ipswich, Aug. 8, 1835.

MY DEAR ———

I know not how to describe the perpetual interruptions, that present, not only this or that particular employment, or pursuit, but in fact every thing I have to attend to. I believe this may be one reason, why those, about whom I am most interested, are sometimes more neglected than the rest of the number, who have a claim on me as a correspondent. I say—*one reason*—because in fact my movements are so irregular, owing to the perpetual incursions of sudden and unforeseen fits of weakness, that seasons have but a very partial influence over letter-writing, more than over any other part of my proceedings. I am obliged to be, what his opponents from his favourite

* Ps. cxix. 71.

expression called, the late William Pitt—‘The Minister of existing circumstances!’ And it is this principle, which as much as any existing circumstances, and existing impressions on the senses from the return of the season of the year, awakening the associations of the imagination, brings you and your dear husband, and all your interesting and never to be forgotten kindness before me with a vividness, that seems to place me on the spot. I creep through the park, climb to — Church going through the quiet back lane. I walk up and down in your garden with dear ——. Again I hope and fear—and I awake, for it is a dream. Do not, my dear child, think that I am nourishing a repining and rebellious pensiveness. I am glad with all my heart, that she is ‘delivered out of the miseries of this sinful world,’ and especially that she has not been called to endure the pangs of survivorship. And when to this I add, that she is not only delivered from sorrow, and from all possibility of sorrow for ever, but is in exquisite unimaginable happiness, how can I be sufficiently thankful to Him, “who loved her, and washed her from her sins with his own blood?” But there is something still more closely connected with the glory of God in my own salvation, arising out of these recollections; and that is—that He who does nothing in vain, and neither brings a sparrow into being, nor dismisses it from existence, without a distinct reason for so doing; and who moreover has assured us, that “He does not willingly afflict nor grieve the children of men”—* has sent this heaviest correction for some special purpose, to inculcate some particular lesson, to effect some particular good to me. I know we do not like to look at matters in this point of view, and

* Lam. iii. 33.

that most of mankind, and some who cultivate a portion of reflection, would tell me that I am considering things too curiously, and endeavouring to make conclusions without materials. But there are two things, which cannot be denied—First, That the wise and loving Father of His children never inflicts upon them more, than, all things considered, the case requires, and next—that he never inflicts pain, but with a view and determination to produce a proportioned good—Nothing in His plan of management comes by surprise; nothing without its end, and object; nothing but what is suitable exactly and definitely to secure that end. It follows then by the plainest dictates of common sense, and by its most undeniable conclusions, that just in the proportion, in which the Lord's dealings are severe to flesh and blood, just in that proportion did the particular circumstances of the case require that it should be so. And again, just in proportion that they are severe, are they adapted to effect the purposes, for which they were sent. Every individual feeling, and every single event—even the fall of a sparrow—are parts of a great and perfect whole, and nothing can be out of its place, or unsuited, or imperfectly contrived or executed; for that would derange the whole. And then again—all this perfect contrivance has one grand end in view, in which the rest all combine, and centre—the salvation of those who have fled for refuge to Him by Jesus Christ. For this purpose are all the movements of nature; and all the plans and proceedings of providence are going on, to bring the heirs of salvation nearer and nearer to their blessed inheritance. “By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.”* What a motive is it to “work out our

* Eph. ii. 8.

own salvation with fear and trembling," that "God worketh in us to will and to do of His good pleasure." * How continually should we be on the watch to mark His hand in providence, to hear His voice within, "for He shall speak peace to His people,"—but—adds the Psalmist—"let them not turn again to folly." † How jealous should we be of any thing, that would divert our thoughts from Him, rival Him in our attachment, or deprive us of the continued consciousness of walking with God in the enjoyment of His love and favour! We are here, dearest —, but for a moment. This is one of the important lessons, which the Lord designed to teach you and me, when He took away her, who was a part of my very being, and who, I know, (though it was not possible, it should be in the same degree) was very dear to you also. And this gives me a double pleasure in speaking of her to you and others, to whom she was dear. First, I know it is a real pleasure to you to recal her memory, and to share with me in paying the tribute of esteem and affection. But, then next, and far more important is the conviction, and more delightful the hope, not only that it is a solemn pleasure to us to do this; but that God for this very purpose, and for every other end, which would be utterly in vain without this, did implant in our hearts this remembrance, that it might endear her character, and example, and vindicate, and recommend that religion which she professed, and which made her what she was—and "by which she, being dead, yet speaketh."

August 11.—This letter, my dear —, is one among many proofs, that I have no talent for epistolary communication, and I think it also proves, that I do not

* Phil. ii. 12, 13.

† Ps. lxxxv. 8.

neglect my friends, because I am unwilling to make the effort of writing a letter, or because I am too careful of my reputation. And they may be thankful, that my weak constitution prevents me from inundating them with successive deluges of laborious dulness. I do not indeed doubt, my dear ——, that you may find in what hath already met your eye something, which, if you will take the pains to divest it of the husk, may lead your mind to the fountain of blessedness, and the streams of refreshment. But I would endeavour to make these things more interesting, by free and friendly communication, instead of disfiguring them, and stripping them of their interest, by obscuring and involving them.

Now once more return good for evil, and let me hear what I especially wish to hear, a great deal about yourselves, and about your dear father and mother, who “continued with me in my tribulation.”

Dear —— is hard at work, and I hope under some impressive sense of the importance of what he has engaged in. Again, my dear ——, my very heart blesses you and your dear husband. But I shall not be able to tell you in this world what I desire that my Lord would do, to requite your kindness to me and my dear wife. But now let me ask something more; that you and he will *daily* occupy *two* minutes (no more) in distinctly praying, that we three may be followers of her, as she was of Christ. I shall not easily let you off, without a promise to this effect. I am sure it is possible, and equally sure it is desirable. To avoid any more delay, I shall only add my love to every friend, and that I am

Your affectionate,

J. T. N.

LETTER XLII.

TO A NIECE JUST BEFORE GOING ABROAD.

Ipswich, Aug. 25, 1819.

MY DEAR ———,

I cannot refuse myself the pleasure of retracing two or three remarks I ventured to make to you yesterday morning, that in case the powerful influence of daily variety of occurrences should for a time obliterate them, you may have them in black and white to refer to. First, I think we agreed, that it was impossible to expect, that the mind could be in any tolerable degree preserved in a spiritual state (so far as the agency of means is concerned) without daily searching the Scriptures; and that this, with earnest prayer, and diligent self-examination, should occupy your seasons of retirement every morning and evening; and that it would be very desirable, besides this devotional use of the Scriptures, to have them in a constant course of regular reading; to obtain a full and connected view of the whole scheme of redemption, and all the topics of doctrine, experience, and practice.

With respect to your habitual and daily experience, if you would live under the power and comfort of religion, you must see how the Apostles themselves lived, and how they exhorted their converts to live. Heb. x. 19—27. contains a short abstract of the privileges, the duties, and the godly fear of a believer. 1. The atoning blood, by which “we have boldness to enter into” the very presence of the heart-searching God. 2. The veil, the human nature of Jesus Christ, which at once mitigates the awful, and displays the encouraging, attributes of Deity. 3. And the High

Priesthood of Christ, in which character He presents ourselves and our prayers acceptable to God, and carries on that intercession, by virtue of which "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him."* Here are our privileges—The duties are contained in verses 22—25. the warning to promote godly fear, 26, 27. If at any time you find, that you are not able to draw near to God with comfort, it will call for close examination, whether there is not something allowed or neglected in sentiment or practice, which disables you from drawing near with a "*true heart*," or whether you have not lost that distinct apprehension of the privileges, which is necessary towards a competent "*assurance of faith*." And if you find this to be the case, I would entreat you never to rest, until you have by prayer and searching the Scriptures recovered that confidence with God, which arises from a believing appropriation of the blood and intercession of Jesus; and till by searching your own experience and practice, you are enabled to detect and give up whatever prevents your "drawing near with a true heart."

If you keep a journal, you will perhaps find it convenient to do so in a sort of triple form. To assist you in referring to any subject or event, it is convenient to occupy about five or six lines every day with a sketch of the day, with the hours of the day intervening,—and between them—the occupations and engagements that actually occurred. A second compartment might be devoted to the frame of your mind during the day, with the improvement or decrease of the effect of eternal objects and spiritual motives on your judgment and practice. The third division would con-

* Heb. vii. 25.

sist of events, conversations, characters, and your reflections upon them.

As you are going into the land of unbelief, it would perhaps be desirable, that you should have Paley, or some other popular and plain writer upon the evidences of Revelation, at hand ; not for the purpose of ammunition but store ; that when an argument occurs in conversation, to which you do not readily see the answer, you may be able to turn afterwards to that department of the subject, which exposes its fallacy, without the labour of revolving the whole arrangement of the evidences from beginning to end in your mind to settle a single point.

I shall only add, be exceedingly careful of time—and above all other time—“Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.”

I remain your affectionate servant in the Gospel,

J. T. N.

LETTER XLIII.

Aug, 13, 1824.

MY DEAR CHILDREN,

I would endeavour, as the Lord enables me, to get a little chat with you on paper, as I have been prevented from oral communication.

“Exhorting one another daily”—says the Apostle, “while it is called to-day” *—about to-morrow we know nothing. Well then ; not to dwell too long on the choice of a subject, the Apostle’s remark perhaps, at once supplies one. What are we doing with our

* Heb. iii. 13.

time? How do we employ to-day? I well know, and lamentably feel, that I am no proficient in the art of redeeming time. But yet perhaps I do not quite lose or waste as much as I did; and this is both something to be thankful for, and something that calls on us to consider what may be the mechanical instrumental methods by which any—the least—difference may be occasioned in this respect.

I think I can say, that in the mere habit of forecasting the principal divisions of every day, it is well worth taking some habitual pains to persevere. I am perpetually disappointed of my intended distribution. But it is well that it was in the heart; and that every morning, as it comes, a man should consider his day as given him for the honour of God, and the good of souls; and should endeavour, under the constraining influence of redeeming love, to devote it to these ends. And it effects something, though not all. Another method of redeeming time, is attention to the movements and pursuits of the mind, both in our choice of subjects, and our method of prosecuting them. The greatest part of my life has been wasted not only in inaction, but in the way in which I have done what I have done.

So many points of doctrine, experience, and practice, are considered for a while, and after thinking and writing upon them, they are thrown by, and something else taken up. I am afraid there will be a heavy charge against us for not pursuing enquiries to an end, which we are conscious are most important to ourselves and others, even of eternal importance, and for treating them, as if they were mere matter of amusement, which had answered every end in furnishing that, and might be thrown by without loss and without sin.

A very few points are in the highest degree essen-

tial; and experimental acquaintance with these, and the continual exercise of “the life of faith in the Son of God,” include all these; and if our minds were diligently kept to the consideration of them, we should, under the Divine blessing, assignably “grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.”

Your affectionate,

J. T. N.

LETTER XLIV.

Ipswich, July 10, 1820.

I shall be truly happy, my dear —, if the Lord permit me, or, I should say, enable me, to speak a word in season, under your present trying circumstances. The scene before you exhibits life in the point of view, in which I may say, as far as regards the conviction of my own judgment, it always appears to me. I seem inclined to wonder—and alas! far more to wonder than to praise and to be grateful—that while all around me are bending under some infliction, or mourning some privation, I am still indulged with exemption from calamity, both personal and domestic; and, except the gentle and too little heeded chastening of my infirm health, I seem scarcely to be reminded by any outward dispensation, that I “must, through much tribulation, enter in the kingdom.” I know not how sufficiently to admire the patience and indulgence of Him, who “knows whereof I am made, and remembers that I am but dust.” And yet, as I before hinted, He has not left me without an habitual conviction of the vanity of life and all its transitory comforts. I have lost

friends on the right hand and on the left, in my passage through life, whose removal nothing can compensate for on earth. Yet I hope I have not altogether "suffered these things in vain," and that these better dispensations have endeared the comforts, which the Lord still spares me, and which He provided for me Himself. "When my father and my mother forsake me, the Lord taketh me up."* And though "He puts lover and friend away from us, and our acquaintance into darkness," yet we are gainers, if He thereby illustrates His own all-sufficiency, and leads us more clearly to behold, how gloriously He is manifested to His believing servants in the person of the Redeemer. I have found, as you experienced yourself, that I have been supported through scenes, which nature shuddered to approach, and I hope the recollection of them is still sanctified and made profitable to me.

Believe me, sincerely yours,

J. T. N.

LETTER XLV.

Nov. 7. 1825.

MY DEAR ———.

I now snatch up my pen to request you will tell ——— my heart truly bleeds for the state of her soul, and the difficulties in which I see she is involved, and especially that she seems infected with that impression, (which is but an old device of our spiritual enemy,) that her former experience was but a dream. Dear ———! is not the scene now passing before thee a

* Ps. xxvii. 10.

dream? Implore her to cling to the cross of Jesus, and tell her every thing may lead her to it. In the midst of the world, this is the explanation of what I see. The atonement of Jesus suspends the stroke of Divine vengeance, till the redeemed are gathered from among these rebels and careless ones; and therefore for the present they are spared. Lord Jesus! hide me under the shadow of thy wing, and gather not my soul with sinners.

Again, beseech her not to give up prayer. Whatever insensibility, formality, contradiction, &c. may cleave to it, still pray—still cry, hold the cross with the convulsive grasp of a dying man, and breathe the prayer of agony in a dying man's feeble moan. I have got no further than this; yet I see no reason to despair! I know the enemy will endeavour to disgrace her prayers in her own eyes, that she may leave them off. But tell her that, with a mind full of anxiety about her, I will comprize all I would ask of her to one single request—that she would, every night, when going to bed, repeat six times distinctly. I wish her to give me a promise to do so, till I release her from the engagement.

I think of you often, but you seem as much out of my reach, as my relations in the East Indies. Could I have planned for myself, I should have asked to have my endeared friends and connections in and about the spot on which I live, almost geographically as they are: and now every thing is to my wish, I hardly find time to get half an hour's conversation. Well, let faith hold on and hold out, and we shall meet to part no more.

Faithfully yours,
J. T. N.

LETTER XLVI.

Ipswich, Nov. 29. 1827.

DEAR ———.

I am often, in imagination, writing letters to you, and many others, for whose welfare I feel an interest. But the occurrences of the day (which, in spite of all my apparent leisure, are still too many for my powers of activity) come full in the teeth of all my epistolary “enterprises,” and so “turn their currents aside,” that “they lose the name of action.” But if a friendly call upon my attention draws me over the threshold, I can sometimes find myself at the termination of a few pages almost without interruption, at least without ultimate defeat. But to the question—‘All I want for myself is a present sense of the Saviour in every one of his attributes.’ This, perhaps, some persons would ironically call a very humble request. But I like it all the better. I see thousands are ruined for not aiming at the best of Christianity; and I know, too, that God never thinks Himself so much honoured, as when we desire much, ask much, and hope much. “Knock, and it shall be opened”—is the blessed inscription over the door of Infinite Bounty, to which poor perishing sinners are invited.

Well; I will endeavour to tell you all I know about this matter from experience. Always aim at much actual converse with the Lord Jesus. I do not mean that we can bring the devotion of the closet, or the pursued train of retired contemplation into the business of the day. But we may carry every thing as it occurs, to the Lord, and so grow in the persuasion, that the petitions we have asked, and the reliance we have

professed in *stated* prayer upon His all-sufficiency, faithfulness, tenderness, unchangeableness, have not been words of empty respect to Him, or of shadowy consolation and support to ourselves.

If the King were to come to —, and tell you that he was ready to listen to any request you would make for yourself, or —, or the little ones, or even for the servants, as soon as you had sufficiently recovered your surprise, you would actually tell him all you could think of, in which an earthly prince could confer a real benefit on you and them. And then, as every request was answered, and perhaps exceeded, if you found him prompting you to ask more than you intended, and assisting you in your enumeration of your wants and requests—If the extent of his bounty was set off by the graciousness of his manner, you would thus acquire a very full sense of what a King is, who really is what a King ought to be. And if at any future time any occurrence of great emergency, in which royal power could alone help, were to take place, the recollection and impression of his character and behaviour would lead you without hesitation to implore his interference.

Well; why not deal thus with the King of kings? It is the only way, in which you can get that habitual impression of His character, offices, relations, dispositions, which you want. You might be powerfully *convinced* by abstract contemplation; you might be *temporarily excited* by earnest prayer. But the actual present application—the expression of the present feeling, the asking a supply for the present want, the exercising faith in resting upon the full persuasion that in some beneficial way that asking will be answered—this alone constitutes and strengthens habitual saving dependence.

Repeat things over and over to keep faith awake. Recall the reality of his promises—"Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my word shall not pass away." * Why—is it anything but the everlasting arm, acting in execution of the eternal will, that preserves the frame of the chair on which you now sit, and the floor that is under it, the house, the world of which it is a part, and that prevents you from sinking into the centre of the earth, or into non-existence? Then consider the vigilance, the tenderness, with which all this is done, the intense love to the soul that He has purchased, and drawn, and is drawing closer to Himself. Look at your children. Do you love them? Do you care for them? Do you watch over them? Faint, incomparably faint image of your Saviour's love to you. Now think on that, till the tear of gratitude fills your eye; but habitually, till it becomes a familiar conviction, till you can say to any suggestion of unbelief—"Ridiculous," with the same feeling, that little —, or — would reject the idea of your taking them out, under pretence of indulging them with a walk; but in reality to lose them in a wood, or push them into a river. Let me ask my dear friend—is not this in reality the plain sense of the matter? If it be, your growth in grace and comfort will be in praying and striving to get this view of the Lord Jesus before your mind. If there are principles, let us live upon them. If we live by faith, let us walk by faith; and then we should remind the Lord humbly, but explicitly, how much His own honour, and the edification of His church is concerned in His graciously keeping faith alive in our souls; and that, if it languish, we shall be wretched in ourselves, and stumbling-blocks in the

* Matt. xxiv. 35.

way of others. But you have experience, as well as faith, to help you. Your prayers for dear —— are answered. Blessed, blessed Lord!

Then, now, I hope you will write to me again. If I can say one word in praise of Jesus, and bring comfort to any of my friends, by leading them to a view of any part of His blessed character, it is delightful indeed. Our kind love.

Yours faithfully,
J. T. N.

LETTER XLVII.

Bocking, Sept. 6, 1839.

DEAREST ——,

I have endeavoured, and shall, the Lord helping me, from time to time to commend you and yours to His faithful care, and to plead His mercies hitherto, and especially in your present confinement, as an argument which He never fails to admit, when it is confidently, and perseveringly urged for further blessings, even “above all that we can ask or think.” That is one perhaps of the greatest blessing of all blessings, that each of the past is argument for expecting more, and praying for them with greater confidence and importunity:—and every additional blessing strengthens this argument, and furnishes fresh materials for this confidence; and all are strengthening the confidence and patience, with which the believer looks forward to future glory; and should sensibly and actually increase the frequency, fervour, and perseverance of our prayers for livelier, clearer, and more

influential views of a blessed eternity. Every favour by the way is a pledge of the end, and should be received by those, "who have fled for refuge" to Jesus—as a confirmation of the certainty, that "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him," and "to keep that which we have committed to Him against that day."

Indeed all His dispensations, each as they occur, are so many testimonies to the love and faithfulness of our heavenly Father. His present dealing with any of us, whatever it is, is the pledge, and the actual proof that He is guiding us forward on the present step towards eternity, by that very means which He sees requisite at that particular point of the journey, all things considered—And if we admit the truth of this, as applicable to every step and every dispensation, how ought we to receive the tender and indulgent proceedings of our heavenly Father towards us, as they are the tokens of His eternal love and choice! Some are "chosen," and the choice is successively confirmed "in the furnace of affliction."* But what can equal the delight of meeting the smiling mercy of our heavenly Father after a period of anxiety, and many, many a struggle between hope and fear, faith and unbelief! What a character and feature is given to every moment of tranquillity and composure, to every agreeable morsel of food, and every sweet sleep, when it is received as coming from the hands of a loving God and Father, and not merely in the order of providential mercies, (which, while the world lasts, are secured indifferently to "the evil and the good,") but as accompanied with the assurance of eternal blessedness, when this world, and all its comforts shall be no more! In this view, providential comforts

* Isaiah xlviii. 10.

excite purely spiritual feelings, and direct the eye of the mind (as they did the thoughts of Adam and Eve in Paradise) to the inexhaustible source of all blessing.

May your views, dearest —, of the loving kindness of our God, and the adorable fitness and all-sufficiency of the great Mediator of the covenant, be in every respect most conducive to the Divine glory, and your own spiritual support and progress! May the blessed Spirit, whose office it is to “glorify the Lord Jesus, by taking of Him,” and His characteristic mediatorial glories, and realizing them to the soul,—be at once your teacher as “the Spirit of truth,” and your continual tranquillizer and consolation as the Holy Ghost the Comforter! May your meditations be clear, heavenly, and at the same time sustaining and composing! We are apt perhaps sometimes to strain the mind too much by the act of pursuing one thought too far, while successive moments are suggesting new varieties of mercy; or by fixing on some subject, which, by excluding some others connected with it in the covenant, does not suggest all the comfort, which faith ought at all times to draw from its divine object. But the true aspect of God in Christ at all times, and in all directions, is at once the brightness and the mildness of love—so as to fulfil that blessed word, “Thou wilt keep” (maintain habitually) “him in perfect” (not fluctuating, partial) “peace, whose mind is stayed” (relying, reposing,) “on Thee, because he trusteth in thee.”* It is not the rest of present experience (though that be sweet) but of absolute giving up of all interest for time and eternity, into His hands as *faithful*.

Your affectionate,
J. T. N.

* Is. xxvi. 3.

LETTER XLVIII.

UNDER SOME SPECIAL FAMILY ANXIETY.

Ipswich, Feb. 1, 1841.

DEAREST ———.

I shall attempt a letter, and may the Lord enable me to say what is according to His mind. My own mental sufferings, though not those of a parent, are such as afford me many points of sympathy with what you feel at present respecting the eternal interests of your precious boy's soul. But every occurrence, dear ———, must, by a Christian, be dealt with, though with ever so much natural trembling, yet with the assumed calmness, which faith instrumentally imparts, by laying hold on the infinitely fatherly love of God in Christ. You must pray for grace to know what to do, and to be *enabled to do it*; and this you must be continually doing. You will then be enabled afterwards to know, that whatever is eventually determined, you, so far as you had a share in influencing it, did not act in your own strength, or your own wisdom. If you are thus denying yourself, and continually putting yourself into the Lord's hands for guidance, and then if you act in the matter with calm firmness, giving your opinion so far as in your sphere of duty the Lord calls for it, by the acts and occurrences of His providence and supplies, and regulates it by the teaching of His word and Spirit; then you may rest assured that the event will be glorious to Him, and gracious to you. Remember you must be firm, without being hurried into impatience; and meek, without sinking into despondence, or charging God foolishly. You will make many a trip, dear ———, "Satan is desiring to have you" on such an occasion, no doubt, "that

he may sift you as wheat,"—may search and probe every corner of your heart, and make use of the desponding chill that follows this painful excitement, to *shake your hold upon God, and weaken the whole of faith in the soul.*

But if you have done all that God, in answer to your prayer, suggests on the whole as right, and the determination arrived at is at last discouraging, judge by faith and not by sight. It is then not you that do it, but God. Get back to Him, "and hope in Him against hope," and wait for an answer to prayer all the days of your life. He is your heavenly Father. Love, and love only, is His disposition towards you. Repeat this to yourself a thousand times a day as a truth, of which you have incomparably more convincing evidence, than you can possibly have of any other truth—Love to ——.

Your affectionate,

J. T. N.

LETTER XLIX.

Ipswich, June 23, 1841.

MY DEAR ——,

I must scribble a bit, and may the Lord give me a word! What an unimaginable mercy it is, that our safety, indeed any part of our spiritual interest, does not rest upon sensation or reflexion! At this time (and it is like many others continually recurring) I can hardly realize an idea of any thing relating to invisibles, except that "the word of the Lord is true, and all His works are faithful!" I know not what I

should do, if I might not cast myself—without a present power of surveying anything in detail, temporal or spiritual—into the Lord's hands, to do every thing for me; to inspire me with every thing by His Spirit, keep me by His providence, direct me by His counsel; and order every thing concerning me, and bring it into execution, as moment follows moment, till step by step, I step into my coffin. O that I could keep this simple idea habitually before my mind! How would it alleviate every gloomy thought, and brighten every cheerful thought! The Lord bless you!

Your affectionate,
J. T. N.

LETTER L.

February 7, 1842.

DEAREST ———,

Well, dear child, let us “remember all the way that the Lord our God hath led us in this wilderness,” and say whether “goodness and mercy have not followed us” day by day, step by step. In many, yea the far greater number of these steps, we have known even as respects this world, much more than the average amount of worldly comfort; and then if we add to it the hope of acceptance with God now, and of blessedness with Him hereafter (of which so many millions of the human race are utterly destitute) with how few has the Lord dealt as He hath dealt with us! Then praise Him for the past, and trust Him for the future. During my late indisposition I almost thought I was getting nearer to God, and seemed to enjoy

some communion with Him, and to be more desirous “to depart and to be with Jesus.” But time is now broken in upon, and the simplicity of a frame of mind discharged from daily business, is confused and perplexed, and I cannot get that clear view of God, nor satisfaction and desire in contemplating Him, which I then seemed to do. Yet I perceive that a hold more or less is to be kept by prayer, even though it be prayer that we are greatly ashamed of, and hardly dare to call it prayer. But let us not omit a moment of prayer, nor of looking to the Lord with that petition, which has been a good deal on my mind lately—“And now Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee!”* That appears to me to be a most comprehensive reflection—a withdrawing all dependence from created things (to the vanity of which David’s mind had been powerfully called by the preceding train of thought) and casting his whole dependence on Jehovah. This is an important act of the believer’s mind, and there is not only a sense of duty in doing it, but of delight also. The believer says, ‘I not only know the duty of trusting in God, but the privilege also; I know that having God for my refuge and my trust. I have not only all the power and wisdom, and strength on my side, but all the tenderness, sympathy, consideration and kindness in the universe.’

Do, dearest, —, let me beg of you, with respect to all your anxieties, to gather them all into one great mass, and tell the Lord a hundred times a day, “Lord my hope is in Thee.” I have positively no expectation from any other quarter in any matter, or with respect to any event, and from Thee, Lord, I hope every thing that infinite tenderness, power and wisdom can effect.

* Ps. xxxix. 7.

Thou hast done much for me. But I look at faith, not experience only, and I expect more than words can express. Who is like unto Thee, O Lord !' Tired and languid, but with kind love to the whole party.

Affectionately yours,

J. T. N.

LETTER LI.

ON AN AFFLICTING FAMILY BEREAVEMENT.

December 29, 1842.

DEAR ———,

Feeble as I am, I must not allow myself to delay a little present endeavour at expression of Christian sympathy, in expectation of a future which may never arrive, or which, if it do, may find me less able still. How unsearchable are the ways of God ! Why —why dearest ———, are you and I spared, and so many more, who are dear to us, and we to them ? O that we and all our Christian friends could in some suitable measure estimate what the Lord is to us, and does for us, every hour of every day, by preserving us individually and to each other ! And how does this illustrate His mercy, in interposing to support us with the consolations of His grace ! When He is pleased to try us by any bereavement, at all times He has been sufficient for us, “a very present help in trouble.” He has never left us, never given us over to the desponding feelings of our own hearts, nor to the suggestions of our enemy, which would either separately—and how much more—combined—have persuaded us to think.

that amid continual successive troubles, there was nothing but to snatch the short lived pleasure of the present existence, or the false smooth composure of "the form of godliness without the power!" Let us "gird up the loins of our mind, be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ." *

Affectionately yours,
J. T. N.

LETTER LII.

February 3, 1844.

DEAREST ———,

The few remaining years (if years at all I have to expect) present so much to be done, that whenever I can accomplish any thing, I am almost unavoidably compelled to attempt it. But I do not willingly thus seclude myself from those who are dear to me, and especially when I know that a line or two might be particularly welcome. Ever since I received your last, I have been longing to take a walk with you on the shore of the vast ocean of eternity, and to anticipate what shall be our occupation, when "time shall be no longer." But the occurrences of every day baffle me for the most part from securing a portion of time for Christian converse.

As to ministerial engagements, I find these what is a fiction in all other demands, that when I obstinately keep to doing no more than I am equal to, I observa-

* 1 Peter i. 13.

bly succeed better ; and that—whereas, when I attempt too much, nothing is done, now something is secured, and something consciously more adapted to the real obligation, than when I am occupied in scrambling without thought. Yet here again disappointment awaits me. In the scramble I have all my life said—‘ Well ; here wants nothing but a determination to undertake no more than I am equal to, and I shall do more than I do now.’ But not so—It is indeed better and more effectually. But very little more is done. I only become more undeniably convinced, that I can do but very little ; but that I may do that little decently, if I will but take the determination to be methodical and deliberate. About —— and —— I felt a strong personal interest, and the events were both very painful to me.* But we shall see and know one day what we know not now. And even now it is our privilege to be assured, that infinite love, tenderness and wisdom, are superintending all that concerns us and ours. This ought to satisfy us, and does satisfy our judgment, that no event could be better appointed than it is, and that “ all is working together for good.” Meanwhile He has bid us expect “ times of refreshing from His presence.” And if we wait on Him in prayer, I know beyond a reasonable doubt, that we shall find them.

But I am such a poor correspondent, that I must turn to some other friend now. And if I cannot be just (which is now past hope) I will endeavour to be so far equitable as to pay each a dividend of a penny in a pound. Kindest love to all.

Affectionately yours,

J. T. N.

* Alluding to two deaths in the family.

LETTER LIII.

Ipswich, May 8, 1846.

DEAREST ———,

I was just about to ask you when ——— was to return, that I might know when I should probably enjoy the real comfort of seeing you here. But your letter of this morning, is better still. “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God our Saviour.” How delightful it is to receive my own comforts, and those of my friends, from His hands, and to know that they are making them effectual blessings indeed, by referring them all to, and receiving them from, that source. How invigorating it is to our whole mental constitution, and conscious existence! And what a happy influence it diffuses over every object and transaction of life, and over all its future prospects, to contemplate our Almighty Father and Friend, not only as the God of providence; nor even simply in His incomparably higher character of the God of grace, as bringing so many sons to glory, that no man can conceive the collective amount; but to perceive, that He is looking upon, and caring for, every individual believer, and to the personal conviction of each, as much as if His whole attention were concentrated upon Him only, and as if He had no object but to make him happy in Himself, and in all His relations and connections, in time and in eternity!

Yours affectionately,
J. T. N.

LETTER LIV.

Urbidge, Nov. 5, 1834.

MY DEAR COUSIN.

I have been purposing to see or write to you ever since I wrote last. At that time I was watching my dear wife's pale countenance for a little gradual addition of colour, and hoping that a careful, but nourishing, diet, with gentle and judicious medical aid, would be made effectual to answer at length the desire of my heart. But the Lord had something better in view for us than mere bodily health. She is probably to be an inhabitant of bed, or of sofa, for life: and I am to set and learn the vanity of all human things by her side; and we are, I hope, to gird up each other's loins for the spiritual race, and "dwell together as heirs of the grace of life." And how tenderly has the Lord dealt with us in this dispensation! I hope it has been our desire to serve him from the commencement of our union. But how feebly, how carelessly, how unfaithfully, have we attempted it, even at the best! Now the Lord has seen this, and He yet would not cast off His poor, unprofitable servants. And then looking at us in another relation, He would not suffer us, as members of His family, to be content to live on scraps, when He is offering us the fulness of His house, and the supplies of that "river, whose streams make glad the city of God." And therefore He sends His gentle chastening to quicken us to our work, and to endear our spiritual privileges. Then, in the next place, how great is the mercy of God in sending affliction! He might have suffered us to go on, satisfied with our slow pace, our low level, and comparatively

indistinct views, and cloudy prospects. But He is pleased, I hope, to “chasten us for our profit”—to shew the emptiness of “the things that are seen,” and, at the same time, to approximate and endear “the things unseen, and eternal.” And shall we suffer the shrinking flesh to hide from us the wisdom, the tenderness, the attractive love, which is thus drawing us towards Himself with the cords of loving kindness? May we “have grace to serve Him acceptably with reverence and godly fear:” and in heart and mind “arise and depart, since this is not our rest.” I think we have never known altogether so happy a season, since we were married, nor one, in which our hearts (however too little even now) were so much quickened in desire after invisible realities. Pray for us

Your affectionate Cousin,
J. T. N.

LETTER LV.

Ipswich, May, 1855.

MY DEAR COUSIN.

You probably see no newspapers, and until this reaches you, have probably been unacquainted with the termination of my anxieties respecting my dear wife. The Lord was pleased to take her to Himself on the morning of the 20th of April, under circumstances of such clear, simple testimony to the reality, and exercise of faith, that whatever desolation I feel in this world, I can feel nothing but satisfaction as respects a better world, both for her and for myself. I have seen the end of her faith, and that the Saviour

had not led her to trust in Him in vain. I have no longer the danger of finding the road to that blessedness to which we both were aiming, so pleasant as to detract, in some measure, from the earnestness with which we sought to attain the end. Now all the influence is of one simple kind, and its result, so far as I am susceptible of it, is the—"to give diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end; and not to be slothful, but a follower of her, who, through faith and patience inherits the promises." And my aim for the rest of my pilgrimage seems marked out in 1 Tim. v. 5. For "he, (as well as she) that is a widower indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day." Thus would I live and persevere, as a believer, and as a minister, to the end of my allotted period. I am most mercifully supported, and my health, being tolerable, I am carried through all my duties wonderfully.

Let me hear from you. It will be a comfort to hear from a fellow-pilgrim. And do not shrink from the painful effort, but write a line or two, and be assured the Lord does not permit me to nourish rebellious sorrow.

Believe me, your affectionate Cousin.

J. T. N.

LETTER LVI.

Ipswich, Sept. 2, 1835.

MY DEAR COUSIN.

Be assured your truly kind letter was not unfelt or unappreciated; nor have I failed, since its arrival.

repeatedly to lament, that I could not be indulged with an interval of leisure, combined with alertness of thought, in which I might acknowledge and reply to it. Many are the epistles, which I weave in the course of ideal conversation with my friends, both as arising out of their communication by letter, and as originating in daily occurrences, which bring them to my recollection. But I am very seldom (comparatively) permitted to give a permanent and intelligent form to them with pen and ink. And now that I have got hold of the materials of communication, let me first thank you for the kind and affectionately sympathetic consideration, which made you anxious to know how I was enabled to proceed with the daily transactions of life, in my solitary, helpless state, after having been twenty-five years indulged with another and a better self. I can only say, that he "who calleth the things that be not as though they were," has marvelously upheld me, though "all my pleasant things are laid waste." As to sense of enjoyment from creature comforts, I seem to have reached a considerable extent of insensibility; yet I hope I am not permitted to neglect either the general and obvious points in the round of daily duty, or those arrangements, which must be habitually kept in some degree of exactness, for maintaining the courtesies and the cheerfulness of social intercourse. Meantime, the failure of interest in the present mortal scene—"the fashion of the world that passeth away"—is so much gain towards a clearer and more impressive view of "the things that are unseen and eternal." And if, as I believe, my dear partner was the Lord's gift to be a help meet for me, and to help me on towards eternal blessedness; then I believe he is accomplishing the more effective part of that intention at the present

time. My thoughts, my habits, my plans, have been by long communication with her directed, I trust, heavenwards. But still, with all the prevailing tendency, which the Lord was pleased to impart to both our minds, there was the present pleasure of communing together on Divine things, which perhaps made us too willing to stay on earth. Now this illusion is dissolved, and the memory of all our past conversations serves to excite only the "desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better." But I must conclude.

Believe me, affectionately yours,
 in our dear Lord,
 J. T. N.

LETTER LVII.

Ipswich, Sept. 13, 1835.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

I have been as usual hurried about since I received your short, but painfully interesting dispatch. But I cannot be easy any longer without hearing further. My friends, dear before, have acquired a double value since some so eminent among them have been taken away. And therefore I hope you will not again allow yourself to remain ill, without distinctly informing me of it, and continuing the information from time to time, till it please the Lord to restore your accustomed health. If my coming for a day or two will afford you any decided satisfaction in your weak state, as furnishing the conversation and counsel of an unworthy minister of Jesus, with whom you can communicate

your thoughts and experience freely, let me by all means come. When I have a call in the path of duty, I seldom fail to find benefit by the change of circumstances, under which I exercise my ministerial commission. I began this last night, and, as I hoped I might have a few minutes to-day, not immediately occupied in reference to my Sabbath ministrations, I should have thought it no breach of the Sabbath, if there had been time, to have conversed with you a little on the remainder of this sheet, on "the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." My head however, is not a little stupid, and I must, I believe, content myself with extracting a thought or two from a sermon, delivered this morning, on Luke xix. 10. O my dear cousin, what a blessed thing, that the Father should send Him, and the Son should say—"Lo, I come, to do thy will, O God"—by the which will such poor lost sinners as you and I "are sanctified, through the offering up of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." We, most of us, set out with endeavouring to save ourselves, in part at least, and think we must not place that absolute reliance on the Saviour which we wish, till we are a little more consistent. And it is true we ought to be humbled in the dust, when we consider how inattentive we are to that injunction—"Be ye holy, for I am holy."* But then there is a wide difference between shame and despondency; for shame we shall have an increasing ground as long as we live. But for despondency there is no ground. For after all that the Lord has been pleased to shew us of the exceeding vileness of our hearts, and our deficiencies in all our duties, what does all this prove, but that we are of the number of the lost—i. e. of those, whom "He came to seek and to save?" Indeed, I suppose,

* 1 Pet. i. 16.

that ever since we knew Him as a Saviour, we have been growing in the knowledge of ourselves, as lost, and of His skill and determination in seeking and saving us. And all His dispensations are directed to this end—to manifest that our disease is *desperate*, but our physician *infallible*.

But I must break off. To His love, power, skill, sympathy, faithfulness, and in one word, *all-sufficiency*, I commend you, my dear cousin, repeating my earnest desire to hear soon, and remaining,

Affectionately yours, in this precious Saviour,

J. T. N.

LETTER LVIII.

ON THE DEATH OF HIS CORRESPONDENT'S MOTHER.

Ipswich, March 31, 1836.

MY DEAR —,

“How” altogether “unsearchable” are the proceedings of the Lord, “and His ways past finding out!”* It was only yesterday your dear mother was present to my recollection, and I was thinking she might possibly be the subject of your filial attendance and attention for a long period yet. But “He that doeth all things well,” orders otherwise; and certainly we cannot even, in a human view of the case, see any thing that could justify us in desiring the prolongation of existence under her circumstances. I have some thoughts of getting to London, if I am spared, in about a fort-

* Rom. xi. 33.

night or three weeks. I shall hope to be with you then, and may perhaps, with the Lord's blessing, be instrumental in setting the consolation of the Gospel before you, when one feels (as I know to be the case) the removal of the object of one's daily prayers and cares to be as heavy a trial for the time, as can be experienced.

Minute and unimportant coincidences, when they occur in important transactions, can hardly pass before the mind without notice. Last Good Friday, my dearest wife received the summons to depart. May you be favoured with the support, with which I was indulged, and far more of the distinct realizing of the Lord's presence than I was favoured with, (for I was at the time of the transaction remarkably dull and insensible); and may He enable you to say, what I trust He did not fail in due time substantially to convince me of—

“Thou dost but take the dying lamp away,
To bless me with thy own unclouded day.”

How deficient the religion of many otherwise religious persons seems to be in this particular, which in fact is the only distinguishing characteristic, which separates spiritual things from earthly, the things that are seen and eternal, from the things that are seen and temporal—the all-sufficiency of the one and the insufficiency of the other! Many pious persons seem to get but little beyond this—that God is something to interest our feelings, and occupy our faculties, and call forth our exertions, and support our reliance in a greater degree, but—excepting degree—much in the same way, that human and terrestrial objects do. But the tender love of our God towards His people, manifested in the gift of His

dear Son, would never suffer Him to inflict those sharp lessons upon us, which He does, if it were not to convince us, that we must not place a lasting dependence upon any thing, or person in the world ; that the creature is to us just what He makes it to be, and nothing more ; and that we may find God in all things, when He gives, and all things in God when He takes away. In short, it is to write that sublime sentiment clearly upon our hearts and minds—"They shall perish, but thou remainest ; and they all shall wax old as a garment, and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed. But Thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end."* And indeed, upon this distinction depends all the comfort which we derive from the relation between a Covenant God in Christ, and ourselves and friends. "Because I live" (says the Redeemer) "ye shall live also." † If we indulge the hope of meeting them again, it all turns upon this truth—"When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory." "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust ; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast forth her dead—then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father." ‡ May our gracious Father give us grace to look upwards, and look forwards to that time, when "He that shall come will come, and will not tarry ;" § and may we be enabled to "wait all the days of our appointed time, till our change come," "that when he shall appear" we may have confidence before him. || How beautiful and encouraging is Job's anticipation

* Ps. cii. 26, 27.

† John xiv. 19.

‡ Col. iii. 4. Is. xxvi. 19. Matt. xiii. 43.

§ Heb. x. 37.

|| Job xiv. 14. I John ii. 28.

of that time—"Thou shalt call, and I will answer Thee; Thou wilt have a desire unto the work of Thine hands."*

But I must now take my leave. "The Lord direct your heart into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ; and fulfil in you all the pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power; that the name of the Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ!"†

Let me hear from you in a day or two.

And believe me affectionately yours,
in our dear Lord,
J. T. N.

LETTER LIX.

Oct. 12, 1844.

DEAREST COUSIN.

Let us keep in the broad road and light of the love and mercy of God: and look on all evenly, in connection and proportion, and not on particular events by themselves. It is in the regular use of the means, and the steady pursuit of daily duty, that we are to expect the blessing. We may easily err, and discourage, and embarrass ourselves, if we employ even the means with too great intensity of desire for some particular end, or impatience for some particular manifestation of divine help. "Wherefore criest thou unto me?"—said the Lord—"speak to the children of Israel, that they go forward."‡ God had not forgotten to be

* Job. xiv. 15.

† 2 Thess. iii. 5; i. 11, 12.

‡ Ex. xiv. 15.

gracious ; He could not deny himself. " Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee." * But there was a little too much earnestness about the present occurrence, a crying about that, as if it were all, and a consequent suspension of attending to constant habitual duty. " Speak to the children of Israel " (and of course to thyself) " that they go forward." Exert faith for the day. Take the steps, perform the obedience, endure the cross of the day, and " go forward." Let every step be made toward an end—an end which will soon be here. The Lord prepare us for it, dearest friend !

Yours affectionately,
J. T. N.

LETTER LX.

April 24, 1846.

DEAREST ———,

How entirely I enter theoretically into your idea of not taking leave, on the ground that believers can never be long parted ! I endeavoured to impress your mind before I left Ipswich, but I was only imperfectly aware of the extent to which the principle was capable of being realized, till a short while ago, as I sat enjoying communication with you, or the intention of it, as I was meditating on writing to you.

I seem, on the other hand, to be more free from hindrance to communication, than it is ordinarily possible I should be, amid the conflicting and inces-

* Ps. l. 15.

sant demands of Ipswich. Thus far I had written, when I found that one of my Ipswich hindrances had followed me here. I fell fast asleep, and, as you see, began even previously to make my letters illegible. O to be under the care of Him, who “neither slumbers, nor sleeps,” and who wakes, and watches, and provides without ceasing, for the one only purpose of protecting, saving, and blessing us both in body and soul ! I am happy, and would be more thankful than I am, to be able to say, that from the little impression I have as yet been able to receive, of the influence of the situation and society here upon me, it is, as to its tranquillizing power, just what you would wish for me. I will not say I grieve that I cannot employ myself more for the Lord ; for I come here on purpose to rest. But I regret that I do not more sensibly feel His great mercy in sending me hither, and providing such kind friends to receive, and foster me, where, being at a distance from the effects of local association, I am capable of receiving that consolation from their kind endeavors, which the habits of thought, connected with almost every thing at Ipswich, prevents my kind and tender friends there from accomplishing. Could I more sensibly feel the undeserved mercy of my God, and the goodness and exquisite tenderness of my friends in this matter, I might perhaps be receiving ten times the benefit and refreshment, and increasingly every successive day beyond what I do now.

The Lord bless you, my dear ——— ! I can truly say I seem to enjoy this little scribble to you, both as respects the consideration of Him, who is the source and bountiful provider of all our mercies, and the engaging in communion with yourself, than I have had sufficient peace and quiet to do for years in our actual conversations together. How happy will it be, if the

Lord should appoint that some portion of this tranquillity should become, by His blessing, and under a sense of His blessing, habitual ; and if He should at the same time cause his light to shine upon my path, and make my way plain before me ! And if he should arrange some habitual plan of daily life, in which I may for the future proceed to “ serve Him with godly quietness,” what a shower of mercy it will be !

Well, however it be, it will be best. Your dearest cousin.

Affectionately,

J. T. N.

P. S. Send me a little bit when you can,—an account of yourself and the rest of my patients and friends.

LETTER LXI.

TO A COUSIN.

I wish for a little habitual communication on that period which cannot be far from either of us. But my constitution, always feeble, is beginning in every way to betray increasing infirmity, and it seems as if the remainder of the voyage of life would be rather drifting along the daily current of events, and obeying their impulse, than any voluntary and reflective use of the helm.

What a merciful indulgence it is, that with this almost entire unfitness for business, (except what by habit almost does itself,) I should yet be enabled to go on with the greater part of my ministerial engage-

ments ! It becomes, however, *now* more imperative than ever, that, while acting as keeper of the vineyard, I forget not to keep my own. I desire to die, as one of our excellent Bishops said, ‘preaching.’* But God forbid I should be so intent on preaching at that time, as not to be yet more occupied with praying ! And how much may our readiness for that important moment be promoted, by habitually recurring (not only in retirement, and on our knees, but in our walks, and even in our busiest engagements) to our wants and helplessness as sinners, and by turning these thoughts into prayer, for the supply of every thing we want—pardon, peace, strength, wisdom, out of the inexhaustible fulness of grace, which is in our Saviour, and all which is ours, if received by faith !

Yours affectionately,

J. T. N.

LETTER LXII.

Ipswich, Nov. 1844.

MY DEAR ———,

I feel deeply gratified by hearing, that you have been wonderfully supported during the course of your affliction. How truly consoling it is, when suffering leads us to our Heavenly Father ! Then, one after another, the scripture sets subjects of meditation before us, which cannot fail to suggest the most interesting and instructive trains of thought. One of the most obvious and prominent of these is that gracious and compre-

* Bishop Jewel.

hensive assurance connected with affliction—"Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord; nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."* We feel something of the amount of this assurance, when affliction has actually brought us into his presence, and set everything else at a distance. In health we are often in danger of undervaluing this token of adoption, and of neglecting its distinct and inestimable character, viz. "he scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Well, then, *it is necessary* that we should have this token of his fatherly love, if ever we hope to dwell with him in his heavenly kingdom. And because we cannot, by our very nature, wish or seek for suffering, (because afflictions are not "joyous, but grievous,") therefore he will, at times, put them in our way. For it is written—"If we be without chastisement, whereof all children in every well-governed family "are partakers, then are we bastards and not sons." † He will not, therefore, leave us without means of knowing and manifesting our adoption into his family. And it is manifested through sufferings—by our manner of bearing them, as we find it observed in the same passage—"If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons." ‡ The mode of endurance discriminates the chaff from the wheat, the child from the slave. Ahab and Judas were fearfully and tremendously humbled: but there was not a particle of childlike submission, or obedience, or *hope*, which there always is in the submission of a child. It is in seasons of affliction that the Holy Spirit, as a spirit of adoption, more especially shows that mixture of love and confi-

* Prov. iii. 11, 12.

† Heb. xii. 8.

‡ Ib. xii. 7.

dence, which is the characteristic feature of God's children, and which is so delightful to him. For "his delight is in them that fear him, and who put their trust in his mercy."* How observable is this confidence in the mind of that prostrate penitent in Lam. iii. ! In verse 21 he gathers confidence from the recollection of "the wormwood and gall" of the Lord's afflictive dispensations.

I had a remarkable instance of this in a godly woman of my own parish. While she was nursing her husband, to whom she was tenderly attached, and expecting to be a widow in a few weeks, with eight unprovided children, the last, a babe in arms, and more precious to both parents, as the last pledge of mutual affection—was taken away, I think, rather suddenly. 'Well,' said she, 'it convinces me of one thing, that my Heavenly Father has not forgotten me.' And her confidence in him has not been overlooked. He has done wonderful things for her.

How blessed it is, dear ——, to have the prompting of his chastening to remind us, that he is "dealing with us as with sons;" and to find that he has given us the Spirit of adoption, not only to acknowledge his relation to us, but to claim it. How much this implies — "*Because ye are sons, God hath sent the spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.*" † And this is also the exercise of the confidence of our acceptance with God through Christ: "For we are the children of God" only "by faith in Christ Jesus." ‡

Yours affectionately,

J. T. N.

* Ps. cxlvii. 11.

† Gal. iv. 6.

‡ Ib. iii. 26.

LETTER LXIII.

Ipswich, July 10, 1846.

MY DEAR ———.

I want the help of my friends to maintain that correspondence with me, which suits a man, who has passed his threescore and tenth year, and who would, if possible, help them, and be helped by them, to get gradually, but diligently, and perseveringly, out of the trifling, and hurry, and perplexities of the present life, and obtain, by communion with God, and with each other, and by the study of his word, such views of another world, and anticipation of its enjoyments, as the scriptures themselves authorize us to expect, and encourage us to pursue.

And I desire this, not only because it is a solemn duty, and because I know, that if death comes upon me unprepared, my end cannot be peace: in that view of the matter it would be my interest to sacrifice every worldly comfort, if necessary, in order that I may be ready with my "loins girded, and my lamp burning:" But I find that the same course, which I would adopt with this view, so far as I do in any measure follow it, is precisely that, which renders all the innocent and endearing pleasures of this life doubly sweet. It is the consciousness of receiving friends, and all their kindness, as tokens of the intensely greater kindness of the gracious giver of all good, that imparts the highest sense of the privilege, and the keenest relish of its enjoyment. It is receiving my food, my sleep, the rain, the sunshine, and the grateful fruits of the earth, as the purchase of that same precious blood, on which I rely for the redemption of my soul, that im-

parts the sweetest satisfaction to these daily mercies. This view of our High Priest and advocate as continually "appearing in the presence of God for us," * authorizes us to receive these gifts with a gracious encouragement to partake of them without fear, and with the confident expectation that they will be accompanied with a blessing. Through the same intercession also, whereby our risen and ascended Lord "is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him," we can receive these temporal comforts, as the pledges of pure, perfect, and eternal satisfactions.

The ground and foundation of all that afford comfort in the present life, and the prospect of complete and unending felicity in the life to come, is the promise of salvation by grace, and wholly of grace, in the obtaining of which our obedience has nothing to do. This received by a "faith, that works by love," will produce a grateful and cheerful obedience, and a growing hope of a happy eternity as faith becomes stronger, as it rests more simply and entirely on the finished work of Christ, and takes us off from all dependence on ourselves, and our doings. We shall then not work that we may be saved; but because we have laid hold by faith on salvation purchased by Christ, and freely offered to us in the gospel. No settled peace without this.

Yours affectionately,
J. T. N.

* Heb. ix. 24.

LETTER LXIV.

Ipswich, Dec. 24, 1846.

MY DEAR ———,

I congratulate you, and all our dear relatives and connections in your neighbourhood, on the return of the day, which gave a Saviour to the world; when “the day-spring from on high visited us, to give light to them that sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death; and to guide our feet into the way of peace.”*

How inestimable this gift! and how little do the generality of those to whom it is offered, consider its value, or recollect, that but for this, no human being could have had any other prospect before him, but that of “everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord;” and that hereby is presented to us a full, free, and everlasting remission of all our sins; and restoration to the favour of God! This had been unspeakable mercy, if the benefit had been merely proposed, “whether we will hear, or whether we will forbear.” But the simple proposal of the blessing is the smallest part of it. The Saviour, when he came, gave us to understand, that “none can come unto him, except the Father” (said he) “which hath sent me, draw him.” † Again his Apostle says—“No man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” ‡ So important is the operation of this third person in the Godhead for effecting the salvation even of one single sinner, that our Lord said—“He shall guide you into all truth;” and “he shall glorify me; for he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.” †

* Luke i. 78, 79.

† 1 Cor. xii. 3.

† John vi. 44.

§ John xvi. 13, 14.

What solid encouragement does this afford to every one of us, who is in earnest in seeking the Lord ! For it assures us, that every sincere desire to give ourselves to him had its origin, not in our changeable wills, but in the work of the Holy Ghost begun in the heart. It is therefore sure to remain ; for it is written—“ He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” * And on the other hand, what a solemn warning does this scripture statement furnish, to prevent the encouragement it conveys, from swelling into presumption !

If faith in Christ be the work of God, and if I can never come to Christ, but as I am drawn to him by the Father, moving me by his Holy Spirit ; how earnest ought I to be in prayer to God, that he would give me this Spirit, not only to begin his work in me, but to carry it on to completion ! How should I examine my faith, to ascertain that it has the marks, and features, by which the Scriptures describe true faith—“ working by love ” to God, making the Saviour exceedingly precious to me, and disposing and enabling me to give up myself unreservedly to him !

Again ; “ faith is a victory. It overcometh the world.” † God says—“ Come out from among them, and be ye separate ; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters.” ‡ And faith replies—“ Behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God.” § In the same manner does faith feel, and express itself to him, who is one with the Father—“ Lord, to whom shall we go ? Thou hast the words of everlasting life ; and we believe and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the son

* Phil. i. 6.

† 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.

+ 1 John v. 4.

§ Jer. iii. 22.

of the living God." * Agreeably to this, such "faith endures as seeing him, who is invisible." Not a day passes without some temptation, in which, from desire to gratify friends, or from fear of the world's opinion, we are in danger of falling below the full proof of that warfare, in which we are engaged and enlisted as Christ's faithful soldiers. And if there be true faith, we shall "withstand even in the evil day." † We shall "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord." We shall "esteem the reproach of Christ," (the same now, that it ever was to his honest and devoted servants) "to be greater riches than all the treasures," indulgences, and good opinion of the world. Such faith will enable us to confess him boldly—be the consequences what they may—and will keep us from "loving the praise of men more than the praise of God." It will, on the contrary, enable us to say to the dearest friends, where conscience and duty are concerned— "Whether it be right to hearken unto you, more than unto God, judge ye." ‡

These things are not easy, my dear —— ; and even time, and some degree of struggle does not make them easy. But if we look to "Jesus, who is the author and finisher of our faith," § he will give more grace, and make us victorious over every difficulty.

With such grace may he bless us and ours ! And as we know that "every one that asketh, receiveth," and that we cannot fail, if we persevere in asking, and certainly shall fail, if we do not perseveringly ask, may we "pray without ceasing," for the teaching and blessing of God, through Jesus, the only channel

* John vi. 63, 69. Heb. xi. 27.

‡ Acts iv. 19.

† Ep. vi. 13. Phil. iii. 8. Heb. xi. 26.

§ Heb. xii. 2.

of blessing, and by the Holy Spirit, the only effectual communicator of every blessing !

My kindest love be with you all in Christ Jesus.

Affectionately yours,

J. T. N.

LETTER LXV.

TO A COUSIN JUST ENTERING UPON THE UNIVERSITY COURSE.

Oct. 23, 1844.

MY DEAR ———.

I have been all but unreasonable, and without explanation may have appeared to be quite so, in not answering your kind letter before. But I have been unwillingly silent. I should have written, if I could have accomplished it, for the pleasure of doing so, and more on the ground of the strong interest I feel about your starting in your academical career, with favorable prospects for mental improvement, and—what is infinitely more important—with the Christian armour bright, and ready against the various spiritual enemies you have to encounter. May the presence and blessing of our gracious God be ever with you ! Aim at setting him before you as distinctly at other times, as at seasons of prayer ; and endeavour to act as in his presence. You will thus, by perseverance, gradually acquire a habit of meeting and repelling opposition, and surmounting difficulties. I do not mean, that you will ever acquire a habit, which will make this struggle easy. It is the greatest mistake to flatter ourselves or others, that this can ever be the case.

Our profession, if faithfully followed up, is a conflict to the last. But if it be faithfully pursued, we shall be conscious of having the breastplate of integrity; and though success can only be obtained by a struggle, (and even so must be gradual,) it will ordinarily, with perseverance, be on the advance. And whatever our success is, if we are still endeavouring, we shall keep an open communication at all times with our God on his throne of grace, and however we may have to tell of defeat, we shall not have to lament conscious treachery of heart.

Your affectionate,
J. T. N.

LETTER LXVI.

July 22, 1845.

MY DEAR ———,

I hope—earnestly and affectionately do I hope—that a few verses at least of Scripture, are daily and attentively dwelt upon, and turned into materials for prayer. Cling as for your very life to these *daily* habits. It is not so much the amount—nay, it is not so much the frame, or the present sensible effect,—which I prize, (though I know there can be nothing done of prayer or reflection, where a spiritual frame and a sensible impression are not *honestly aimed* at) as the believing determination to go on with these things, because God, who is love, and infinitely wise love, has enjoined them; and because, if continued in faith of the promised blessing, they shall certainly be blessed. Whether sensible comfort and relish is vouch-

safed in our religious exercises or not, let our faith be fixed *nakedly, irrelatively to any thing else*, on the word of the living God : and, as far as practical, in the way that we believe a philosophical or mathematical, or every day common truth—i. e. totally independent of our feelings.

Your affectionate,
J. T. N.

LETTER LXVII.

Aug. 29, 1845.

MY DEAR ———,

I bless the Lord on your behalf, that you are going on your academical path with so many favorable circumstances ; with no wrong habits of life to conquer, and a turn of mind for your work ; so that, as far as nature can cooperate with grace, you have less obstacles than many young men in your stage of the journey of life. Your attention is all at liberty to be employed on the endeavour to make every hour of business, or relaxation, of success, or disappointment, subservient to your great object of “ bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” It is no small comfort to me to be able to see, that you have in the view of human calculation, put no voluntary impediments in the way of your future usefulness, or comfort : and that all the pursuits, to which good sense or natural inclination has attached you, are likely to subserve some good purpose. How blessed is it to have no predominant taste, that, however refined it may be, is yet, we are conscious, stealing too much of our time and our hearts, and incapacitating us for seeing God’s hand, and tasting his love in everything !

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May we be laying hold of all opportunities and advantages for realizing the idea of aiming at being extraordinary Christians! The more I see of my own heart, and of others, the more I am convinced that, except we make this endeavour, our Christianity will come to nothing at all. And how can we, if we love and honour our Master, bear to serve him slightly or slackly? There can, in such case, be either no communion with him—for the man, who is conscious that he is indolent and half-hearted in the cause of Christ, can have no satisfaction in prayer) or else it must be all lamentation, looking back on every day as it passes, as a wasted day.

I find that even the fragments and remnants of life may be applied to some use for God, and our friends and acquaintance, if we are watchful for opportunities, and have our real work always at heart. May we both be found in this frame and endeavour.

Affectionately yours,

J. T. N.

LETTER LXVIII.

Sept. 25, 1845.

Your letter was full of interest to me; and as I received it when setting out on a walk, I chose to hazard running my head or foot against any thing that might be in my path, rather than not get a look at its contents.

I bless God, when I compare your excursion with mine, not only when I was of your age, but even more than ten years older. My mind was spoiled by indolence

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and indulgence, and conscience awake to the necessity of “fleeing from the wrath to come;” but I had not actually fled to Him, who was typified by the Cities of Refuge. I can truly say, that I found more gratification in one week’s excursion, (when I was at the Bible anniversaries, just about the time when I first wrote to you) than in all the pleasure of natural scenery in former times, (for which I do not conceive that my eye or feelings have lost any of their sensibility) for the taste or fancy. My intercourse with Christian friends was pleasant and, I hope, profitable; and I have since learned respecting a dying lady, whom I think I told you I had visited, that the word I dropped had been acceptable and supporting, and—far better—that since I was there, she had entered into the joy of her Lord; and was no longer under either want or capacity of earthly comfort.

The Lord prepare us both for what we have further to do in time, and for the endless blessedness of beholding that face, which was marred and defiled for you and me, now more splendid than the meridian sun, after having heard from his lips—“Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!”*

Ever yours,

J. T. N.

LETTER LXIX.

Nov. 5, 1845.

MY DEAR —,

“My soul cleaves to the dust,” instead of that up-

* Matt. xxv. 34.

ward movement which ought to be the course of the spirit.

I must however write, that I may, if possible, excite you to the same exercise of mind and fingers. I have been talking with you from morning to morning in imagination, and lifting up an aspiration from time to time, that "the Father of mercies, and God of all comfort," would give you richly of the supplies of his grace, for every demand in every day's stage of your journey. Time, even every minute of it, whether we will or no, must be expended on something. May you advance in the spiritual dexterity of laying out every minute, whether in business or relaxation, prayer, Scripture, or reflection, so as to realize something by the outlay!

Your affectionate
J. T. N.

LETTER LXX.

Noc. 13, 1846.

MY DEAR ———.

I knew you could get much better chesnuts at Cambridge, but then you could not get Ipswich chesnuts, nor associated with the recollection of roasting and chatting over the place where they grew. A thing sometimes, which has no value in itself, may acquire a very considerable one from being the *medius terminus*, which links two ideas together. The wick of a lamp may be made of anything, almost of nothing. But you cannot connect the oil and the flame together, nor apply one to the support of the other, without it :

and so I thought the chesnuts might connect Ipswich and Cambridge; and by the spontaneous ignition of a spark of recollection, kindle and sustain the same cheering light of enjoyment there, which they had done on the spot.

I hope you are now and then looking at the bright allurements of that invitation—"Follow me, and I will make you to become fishers of men."* I know you will see the difficulties the more deeply, and the more seriously, yes, and the more desirously you think of it. For the more ardently you desire it, the more jealously will you scrutinize yourself, as to your thorough determination to follow no call in the matter but that of the Holy Ghost, and to be content with nothing but the self-denying, self-renouncing frame of the first publishers of Christ's gospel, and their love of Christ, and of souls. This will often excite the question—"Who is sufficient for these things?" But it ought not to excite despondency. They felt and acknowledged—"Our sufficiency is of God."† And if you wait on him, he will enable you to say—knowing what you say—the same thing. You know and believe, "that he who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ;"‡ and while in a sense of your own weakness, you cast yourself on him by faith, he will strengthen and supply you "above all you can ask or think." This conviction of your inability is the way, by which he trains up all his ministering servants; and gives them the true meaning of his invitation, "Follow *me*," and not human leaders, "and *I* will make you to become fishers of men." Thus he has done in multitudes of instances, since he spake that word.

* Matt. iv. 19.

† 2 Cor. ii. 16; iii. 5.

‡ Phil. i. 6.

And the faith of many has he tried, not only by discouragements, before their entrance on their work ; but after they have long laboured, and said “ we have toiled all this time, and taken nothing.” Yet, persevering in obedience to his command, they have suddenly found, that “ they were not able to draw the net for the multitude of fishes !” Then, as Peter, they say,—“ It is the Lord.”* May he so guide, bless, prepare, and prosper you !

Your affectionate,
J. T. N.

LETTER LXXI.

MY DEAR ———,

In the kind note which you were so good as to write to L., I am concerned, my dear ——, still to observe the recurrence of dissatisfaction with yourself. I am *concerned*, not *impatient*. Nor is my concern excited by your mentioning, but by your feeling, this impression. And it is concern, not accompanied by surprize: for I expect that this will be, more or less, a part of the conflict you will have to maintain, the particular cross which the Lord gives you, as he has given me, to bear for his honour, and our edification. Of course the enemy will endeavour by every means in his power to make us weary of carrying this cross, to drive us to think that the Lord is a hard master. And if he cannot make us go the length of dishonouring our profession in the eyes of others, by acting incon-

* John xxi. 6, 7.

sistently, yet he will try hard to prevent our deriving any comfort from it ourselves.

But you will say, that the inward pain and dissatisfaction you experience, would be nothing, if it were not for the fear, that it may be the occasion of lessening your power of edifying others, and may discredit the Gospel. Take care the enemy does not drive you into that very pit, by exciting an unreasonable, and totally unfounded fear of it. How many eminent servants of God have appeared to waste their whole lives in obscurity, without a hundredth part of the acceptance that you and I enjoy! Who is there that does not delight to shew us kindness? If, with a path so remarkably smooth, we had nothing to make us feel, that in "the world we shall have tribulation," should we not be without one principal mark of God's children? * The thing is just so managed, that we shall have influence and acceptableness for our Master's service; and yet that self shall not make a revenue of it. And it is the same with respect to edification. We cannot deny that the Lord has been pleased to do others good by our means. But then, while they are grateful to us, and thankful to God for us,—we feel that what we have done has been so little the sort of thing *we* contemplated—so lamely accomplished by us, so inferior to every thing that others have done for the Lord, that we are ready to think nothing has been done. In other words—God is glorified, our neighbour edified, and self is nullified. Here then is that happy complication of interwoven blessings, which nothing but a Divine hand could accomplish. Let us be content, dear —— when Omnipotence hath done its best for us, and Divine love its kindest. Let us be sober-minded, and give ourselves up to the race that

* Heb. xii. 7, 8.

is set before us, "*Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, that hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.*" "Yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith."*

Your affectionate

J. T. N.

LETTER LXXII.

MY DEAR ———,

To eternal life through much tribulation—You are looking about perhaps for some green lane, like that down which the ruddy lad in Pilgrim's Progress came, to see whether you cannot avoid this hot dusty troublesome road, where there is so much fatigue and weariness. More than half our time is taken up in such devices, and the end of them is to find, that we have lost our way and our time, and that we must get back again, with the dread of being at the present on forbidden ground. While we are looking about to avoid the cross, we are certainly out of the path, and consequently are sure to find no directions, no promises. But go forward, and you will find them in plenty. There is—for instance—the direction above: and more of the same sort in abundance. "If ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts." † "But what shall I do?" "Com-

* Col. i. 11, 12. Heb. x. 37, 38.

† 1 Pet. iii. 14, 15.

mit your way unto the Lord." * Commit the object of your care to him. He can sanctify these things to do more for the good of her soul than all our kindness. Commit those who differ from you to him. He may give a testimony to your integrity and kindness in their hearts, which may be the means of their "glorifying God in the day of visitation," when he shall visit their hearts with his grace. And pray abundantly for yourself too, that all that befalls you may be sanctified to you. You are (that is—if you are like me) thinking to get through your present trials, labours, watchings and anxieties ; and then, when you get home again (dear home !) you will arrange all your scattered thoughts, and reap the benefit of the present exercises of your mind. Did you never make such promises before? And did you never find that they ended in nothing? What we seek in those cases is ease, not leisure ; and ease being found, we gradually forget the resolutions we made when we were in trouble, and subside into the same Laodicean state we were in before. But how know we, that we are to see home again? "Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as a stranger and a pilgrim," be at home every where, as much as that character will allow ; or be at least equally *near* home (that is, Heaven,) wherever you are. Pray to be made fit for death, judgment, and eternity, and to live every day as if it were the last. Especially improve afflictions, depressions, discomfort of every kind. These are the Lord's times for teaching, and if we let them go by, we are sure to mourn the loss for ever afterwards.

Nothing is so hard as our own hearts are ; and as they lay copper in aqua fortis, before they begin to engrave upon it ; so the Lord usually prepares us by

* Psalm xxxvii. 5.

the searching, softening discipline of affliction, for making deep, lasting impressions upon our hearts. Pray then, that (as “you were hereunto called, and because Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps”) that now, while it is soft, the image of Jesus may be engraven upon your heart, that “the same mind may be in you, which was also in him;” and that you may, as he did, “commit yourself unto him that judgeth righteously.”* Think how important it is, from the scene before you, to have a mind fortified by grace and habitual endurance against all outward troubles, and begin the habit betimes. Live in the world, but live above it. Live for the benefit of others, not for your own ease. Let your heart and your treasure be in heaven; and there let your daily conversation be. In that prospect, and in that habit of mind, is to be found the only relief from whatever gives us uneasiness. Our own reasonings and strivings do nothing but weary ourselves, and make us unfit for the service of God, and the benefit of our fellow-creatures. “Be still, and know that he is God.” Harken, what God the Lord will say concerning you.† Grieve not yourself, but let “your eyes be unto him as unto the hand of a Master,”‡ that you may be ready to run on his errands: to do his work here on earth, or to attend his call to a better world.

Yours in the Lord,

J. T. N.

Now is the time for prayer. Now is the time for understanding and feeling Scripture. Affliction opens many a hard text, and stamps many a precious promise

* 1 Pet. ii. 21—23.

† Ps. xlvi. 10; lxxxv. 8.

‡ 1b. exxiii. 2.

LETTER LXXIII.

WHEN ABSENT FROM HOME.

Sept. 19, 1846.

To my household, beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, “grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

I beseech you to be ever looking to the Lord in whatever you are engaged—whether the works of your daily calling, or in prayer and reading the word. Nothing is, or can be, a fit occupation or state of mind for us, which shuts the Lord out of our thoughts, or makes us insensible to his love, and forgetful that he is near to us, and that his eye, and heart, and arm, are always employed for our good. On the other hand, every employment, in itself useful, “is sanctified by the word, and by prayer;” and we may please ourselves with the thought, that at our meals, at our work, he is near, and looking with kindly encouragement on all that we do for his sake, and furnishing us with strength, and bestowing his blessing upon us. Thus let us go on—from day to day, beginning and ending each day with prayer, and maintaining communion with the Lord throughout the course of the day, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and we shall meet at length in his heavenly kingdom. Let that meeting be ever before our eyes, and let us labour to be accepted of him now, and at his coming. Tell —— to give herself to the Lord without hesitation. It will be a great deal harder every year it is delayed; and every delay will make it more improbable, that it will ever be done at all.

LETTER LXXIV.

TO THE SAME.

Sept. 23, 1846.

BELOVED IN THE LORD,

I am thankful to hear, that in general you are all in health, and I am concerned to learn that — is an exception. Remember me to him. Tell him I feel for him, and with him, as truly as if I were by his bed-side, and that “it is my heart’s desire and prayer to God,” that the affliction may be sanctified to him. May he now feel, how entirely he needs the blood of Christ, to wash his soul from the guilt of sin ! and may he be fully persuaded of the freeness, with which this precious benefit is granted to all who seek for it ! May he knock at that door of grace and mercy with persevering prayer, till he can say—“ I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded, that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.”* I trust you are with him as much as you can, and attentively considering the particular frame and care of his mind, and directing him to those Scriptures, which it specially calls for—May we all get some advantage by his affliction, and be reminded of our liability to affliction and removal ! May the thought that the Lord has laid his hand on one of our members, be not only seriously reflected on, but turned to some habitual practical use ! In every daily prayer let us think of —, and pray more for him and for ourselves. In every Scripture we read, let —’s case remind us of sickness and death, and let us now

* 2 Tim. i. 12.

pointedly see, how that Scripture applies, as warning, instruction, promise, or precept, to ourselves individually and to the rest of us. In every conversation let us think how much more careful we should be of our words, both for our own personal benefit, and for the spiritual advantage of the rest, since we may soon be laid upon a sick bed. And when we lie down to rest, may we be more earnest to cry for repentance, faith, and forgiveness, because we know not—though we lie down well—but we may wake in disease or in another world!

But specially let all be made subservient to the endeavour to persuade ourselves, that Christ is knocking at the door of our hearts, willing and waiting to be admitted, to dwell in us, and to bless us with his grace; and that nothing more is necessary to our happiness, than that we should be willing to hear his voice, and open the door, and let him in.

Tell ——, that the Lord Jesus, who shed his precious blood to make peace with God for our sins, will never forsake those, who cry to him, and trust in him. After having touched our hearts, and made us feel our need of him, he will not shut the door against us, when we come, beseeching his grace and mercy.

PART III.



LETTERS TO HIS FRIENDS.

THOUGH Mr. Nottidge's kindness, courtesy, and Christian affection flowed naturally to all around him, yet few were the friends beyond the family circle, to whom he opened his heart in entire unreserve of intercourse. His correspondence with some of these, has been destroyed, or was so intermingled with matters of the strictest confidence, that it cannot be produced.

We commence with extracts from his correspondence with one, whose name must ever be embalmed in the reverential affection of the Church—the Rev. Charles Simeon. To him he had been introduced at an early stage of his Christian life ; and with him he contracted an interchange of mind with no common glow of brotherhood. The few incidental notices towards the close of Mr. Simeon's biography will shew, how warmly the feelings of friendship were reciprocated.*

The early letters to his revered friend refer to the important object, which—especially during the latter period of his life—occupied his most intense interest. Most persons are aware of that mark of Mr. Simeon 'as a Churchman,' which the Bishop of Calcutta has emphatically noticed—'devoting his property to perpetuate in numerous populous parishes the selection

* pp. 606, 767—769, 789, 803,4.

of devoted and able ministers.' * Mr. Nottidge, fully entering into his friend's views, was a large contributor to the funds successively raised for this object. Allusions to this sphere of Christian devotedness are retained, in order to keep before the Church a work, which—so far as it has been carried out, has been eminently honoured with our Divine Master's approbation, and which is capable of being enlarged with all the rich fruits, that belong to a plan of 'Church Extension,' upon the genuine principles of the gospel.†

It has been thought upon the whole expedient to place the letters in the several sets, in the order of their dates, rather than to preserve a general chronological arrangement, by amalgamating the whole in one promiscuous mass. By this means, some connection is preserved in the consecutive correspondence, which would otherwise be lost.

* Recollections. *Ib.* Finis. Comp. pp. 746—750, 776—788.

† It may be well to observe, that Mr. Simeon's plan of purchasing the advowsons of populous parishes, and placing them in the hands of right-minded trustees, with the view of securing, so far as possible, a succession of able and devoted ministers, has been followed up by a combined effort for the same purpose. 'The Church Patronage Society (of which Mr. N. was one of the originators, and to his death a liberal friend,) has been organized under the sanction of some accredited names, and is exclusively devoted to this object. It is already in possession of several important advowsons: and it were well, if it received a wider range of support. The Rev. E. Barlee, Worlingworth, near Woodbridge, the Honorary Secretary, would give any information to enquirers: and Messrs. Herries, Farquhar and Co., St. James Street, London, would gladly receive any donations or subscriptions in aid of its too limited funds.

LETTERS.

LETTER I.

Southampton, Aug. 25, 1816.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

After reading your truly kind letter—and a few minutes on my knees—and asking myself, what I should wish I had done with the money, when “the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised,” I seem to have my way so cleared, and so little inclination to confer with flesh and blood, that I say at once, “Here am I, send me.” May the Lord bless, direct, and prosper us in every step of the business, and may the thousands of that populous parish drink abundantly of the waters of Salvation, which he may enable us to minister unto them! May I be duly sensible of the honour done me, of the blessing of a willing mind, and at the same time duly humbled at the thought, that I sacrifice to the Lord of what costs me so little, and that the poor widow gave more than it is within the compass of possibility for me to give. Believe me,

Your truly obliged and affectionate,

J. T. N

LETTER II.

Bocking, Oct. 17, 1816.

DEAR AND HONOURED BROTHER,

“ Praised be the Lord, who hath not cast out our prayer, nor turned his mercy from us ! ” * But as the prospect is obscured in one direction, it brightens in another. I say—*our* prayer. But from continual languor, and hurry, I am covered with shame to think, that scraps of ejaculatory petition are almost all that have been offered by me, even upon the most awfully interesting subjects of usefulness, to which our attention has lately been directed. The old nonconformists were something cumbrous in the apparatus of their piety. But there is much in their practice, from which, I think, we may learn useful lessons. I am apt sometimes to think, that —— was a call to more earnest supplication ; † and I should not have wondered to have seen light break in upon us there, if in the spirit of humility, and contrition, and faith, we had contrived a day for some half-dozen or half-score of men, whose minds are in the business, to have met together, and have spent a day or half a day in humiliation and prayer.

I am delighted to hear that the cause is prosperous at ——, and I conclude that all difficulties are got through about the living, which I understood for some little time was clogged by some intervening impediment. I have only to say—“ *Name my proportion* ”—

* Ps. lxvi. 20.

† The advowson of a most important station in the Church, which Mr. N. combined with Mr. Simcon and other friends in an unsuccessful effort to purchase.

and I earnestly entreat and confidently rely on you not to spare me, but assign me such a share of the expence, as my means, and the demand, and the impediments in the way of other subscribers, conjointly dictate to your judgment.

Most affectionately yours,
J. T. N.

LETTER III.

Ipswich, Sept. 7, 1817.

MY VERY DEAR BROTHER,

Your kind and welcome intelligence, for which I desire to bless the Lord with all the powers of my soul, as for that which I hope will redound to his praise throughout eternity, reached me *here* this morning. My share is most cheerfully ready at any time on a day or two's notice: and happy, if money could speak, to be so employed. Pray do not lose sight of the ten livings for £5000, and at your leisure say what you think of doing about them. Nothing must be considered as done, so long as any thing remains to do.

I am here, and I have, for the present at least, lost the house, which I thought to make my nest: and I have not a single prospect of any thing that will suit me. But how shall I bless the Lord that he gives me something like a desire to let him carry me blindfold into the place, where he has fixed the bounds of my habitation, and to desire that it may not be the width of a brick, to the right or left of the very spot. You know, my dear Sir, that this must be a very

theoretical degree of perfection ; that even the distant view of it is hardly maintained for half an hour together ; and that pride, and indulgence, and impatience, are building up walls between me and such views every moment. But it is a privilege to desire it. Pray for me, that I may not give up the desire of entire conformity to the Lord's will, and that I may not mar my usefulness by thinking too much about self, nor provoke the Lord to set me down in *comfortable inefficiency* ; and that on the other hand I may omit no prudent measures to settle myself, nor incur any unnecessary privations or inconveniences, which might render me less prepared to serve him with all godly quietness and cheerfulness.

My dear wife is quite well, aiming at the same frame of submission, and lamenting the same difficulty in maintaining it. She unites with me in most cordial wishes for your happiness, and the supply of every covenant blessing.

May the Lord's healing hand be with Mrs. Dornford, and every light pain be sanctified now, and followed by a weight of glory hereafter ! Present us most kindly to her.

Most affectionately yours,
J. T. N.

LETTER IV.

Colchester, April 13, 1826.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You kindly bid me not straiten myself. But in fact, my father having a little before his death vested most

of his funded property in land, I cannot allow myself to wait, till the slow and ill-managed economy of my income puts it in my power, before I attempt to do at least some little towards the purposes, in which you have made such gigantic exertions. And if I observe, that the last few months have been very unfavourable for putting land to sale, and that the reasonable wish of most lenders for a mortgage of some continuance makes the interest eat up the principal, and sinks a large proportion of what might be employed on the Lord's service; you will readily believe that it is not said, because I am unwilling to part with my money, but because I really feel ashamed of doing so little.

My health, I think, is better than when I saw you last, but little improvement as to effective strength. My head is almost always suffering a cloud of confusion; I suppose from the erysypelas; so that I seem scarce ever to see my way in any thing with clearness; and a little (though mercifully but a little) tendency to hypochondriasis makes me take many a step heavily. But probably if I did not thus constantly feel, that I have not the wits of a child, nor the strength of a moth, I should lose some of the brightest and sweetest displays of the Lord's all-sufficiency and tenderness. So on the whole, I hardly feel inclined to ask that this thing should depart from me, though flesh and blood would be well pleased to get rid of the burden.

From your affectionate,

J. T. N.

LETTER V.

WRITTEN ON RECOVERING FROM A LONG CONFINEMENT.

Ipswich, Nov. 25, 1829.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I bless the Lord and you for thinking of me in your best moments. I cannot regret my confinement of eight months, when I recollect the sweet seasons it afforded me of intercessory prayer, such as I never before or since, had opportunity for. I am—how shall I say I am?—Just enabled to get quietly for the most part through as much of my bounden duty as will continually occupy me without fatigue, which is about a tenth part of what my situation demands. But I cannot do more than is possible, and I know that fretting or over-exertion would only make that little possibility less. Now and then I am in difficulties, which appear for the time to be great; and I feel like a tiger, with a dog under each paw, and a third in my mouth, glaring defiance at a distinct set of approaching troubles, like a company of hunters following the dogs. Sometimes some little contemptible inconvenience, like a gnat in a tiger's nostril, eluding attack, and with great power of annoyance, seems to bid defiance to all attempts at dislodgment. Mostly, however, I am much more like the insect; stingless I hope, but then with as little power to do good or evil. But all this illustrates the glorious grace of our covenant God, and leads to a more heartfelt ascription of that praise, "The Lord liveth; and blessed be my Rock, and let the God of my salvation be exalted."* My health is (for me) very merciful and

* Psalm xviii. 46.

equable, but my strength declines. Many hours in the day I seem able to do nothing—not even to pursue actively and with savor any amusement. But I am free from pain, and vegetate quietly, waiting, waiting—and endeavouring to call back my too vagrant mind to the sure and blessed end of that waiting.

Kindest love from wife and self—and convey our affectionate sympathy to Mrs. D. I hope the Lord will enable her to smile through her tears,* and that will be perhaps as much as we can expect, till she arrive there, where He “will wipe away tears from all eyes.” But truly it is far more glorious for a Christian mother than a Spartan mother, to have her warrior son brought home on his shield from fighting in the foremost ranks of the Redeemer’s army. Surely there is in this thought “spoil for her to divide, that tarrieth at home.”

The Lord make his face to shine upon you and

Your affectionate,

J. T. N.

No one has occurred to me as coming near the qualifications, which would be requisite for a successor to him. He should be Whitfield and Wesley in one.

LETTER VI.

A MEMORABLE DAY, BRINGING WITH IT THE REMEMBRANCE
OF OUR GOOD OLD KING GEORGE III.

Ipswich, June 4, 1833.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have been longing for a day, when my infirmities, and the perpetual succession of petty demands on my

* After tidings of the death of that wise and devoted friend of India, the Rev. T. Thomason.

time, would allow me to acknowledge your last welcome communication, and tell you how grateful was the intimation, that we might hope in a little while to lodge you once more in the red brick house. But my head is very feeble, and when I am indulged with an interval of comparative ability to think, I find all my little time is seized on for arrears.

When may we expect to enjoy the heartfelt pleasure of seeing you, and the Lord's messenger to St. Peter's? * Come, and may you come in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ. How happy shall I be to welcome at all times "him that cometh in the name of the Lord!" And how especially have I materials in the present instance for every feeling of gratitude and delight both to the Lord, and to yourself, who, in benefitting the Divine vineyard, have selected that portion of it, which makes me personally your eternal and thankful debtor. Whether I live or die, this arrangement is full of hope for me. It will delight me to witness the enlargement of the Church, if the Lord prolong my pilgrimage, and it will gild the evening clouds, if, as my infirmities suggest, the evening be gathering upon me. But infirmity has been so uniformly the characteristic feature of my being, and my proceedings, that it is not impossible, but I may be permitted to experience, and exhibit for some years yet how frail I am. May "his strength but be perfected in my weakness," and his power glorified in my infirmities, and I shall welcome and value them as much as the powers and qualifications of an archangel!

You will conclude from the above, that I am not very stout. My health on the whole is better, but a

* A Church at Ipswich, then vacant, in Mr. Simeon's gift, and which in this and the succeeding vacancy he lived to see filled up with great blessing to the Church.

most unserviceable state of head. My dear wife continues poorly. But the sight of you is (as the proverb says) 'good for sore eyes.' So let us see you, and be refreshed by our mutual faith in our increasingly precious Lord.

Believe me,

Your affectionate

J. T. N.

LETTER VII.

Ipswich, Oct. 29, 1835.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am still beset with a clouded head, and a pensive heart. But I do in my conscience truly, and in my judgment most convincingly, feel the honour, which the Lord puts upon me by being pleased to chasten me, and to allow me to glorify him in much weakness; so that every day, with my sense of inability, seems a hair-breadth escape, and perhaps with my languor, nothing but a painful sense of it, would stir me up to any exertion at all. A little less reproach of conscience; and I might composedly consign myself to a life of inactivity. How blessed the corrections that prevent this!

I continue to feast on Mr. Venn's letters, and not the less, because they sometimes speak of Mr. Simeon. I have got a large piece left yet; and shall be sorry when I get to the end; though I know no book, that is more likely to be caught up by me again, and again, after I have once become acquainted with its contents. That continual springing towards heaven is so alluring

and encouraging. His sentiments are like wine, you get a cordial for the day almost in a sentence.

I hope your domestics are well. Tell them I feel an interest about their souls, with my Christian love, and that I hope they will know their privileges and the day of their visitation, and “give all diligence to make their calling and election sure.”

Few things have come with such warmth of encouragement to my mind as your telling me last May twelvemonth, that you had remembered my request to pray for me two minutes every day. With my empty and yet rumbling head, that hardly knows what pursued prayer means, it is a great comfort occasionally to take the name of one, two, or three dear friends—and commend them in two words to “our Father.” Oh! the delight to lodge you in that protection, to ask for you that provision, to commend you to that guidance—to consign you to that combination of Omnipotence and love, which those words convey, even beyond all our powers of apprehending them! May he shed his choicest blessings on you, and make all grace abound towards you!

My love in Christ Jesus be with your spirit,

Your affectionate

J. T. N.

LETTER VIII.

Ipswich, Jan. 13, 1836.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Do what I will, I find I am always behind with every thing that I wish to accomplish. The recur-

rence of weak seasons is so habitual, and sometimes they are of so long a continuance, that it seems impossible to effect any observable march in advance of the difficulties and entanglements that pursue me. I have now for a long time been more in a state of inaction, than in a frame of inactivity. Yet arrears accumulate; and even in spite of some actual endeavours, what has been attempted remains unaccomplished, or ineffectual. I had actually written you a letter, which was to have been taken by a young lady, who was going to visit her brother at Cambridge. But, by a strange mistake, though I sent it to the house, it so fell out, that it was left behind, and returned to me. It was written hastily, with a view to be in time; and on reading it over, I did not discover anything, that deserved putting under the guardianship of the post. I perceive, on turning to it, however, some particulars which I shall just now allude to. It was written somewhere about the beginning of November, and I had at that time just finished Mr. Venn's Letters; of which, I see, I observed, that they appeared to me worth some bushels of most memoirs and letters that I ever read. Especially I was interested by his recollections of his own Ministry, and the remarks on those points, on which he thought he had not spoken with sufficient strength to his own people. Yet I find that I get but little, though I am thankful for that little, help from these great men, except a little feverish excitement at the time of reading; for it has been truly remarked, that it requires nearly as much ability to profit by advice, as to give it; and I suppose it approaches still nearer to a demonstrable truth, that it requires nearly as much ability to follow a good example, as to constitute or manifest that example.

I see that, though you never got my letter, there is a sort of free-masonry in Christian sympathy, which led you to answer what I had asked, though it never met your eye. I say in November—"I hope " your bow abides in strength, and that your arms continue to be strengthened by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob ;"* and that the great Head of the Church may pour his consolations into your heart, and his unction into your preaching. is the prayer of your affectionate, &c." And you tell me—"my life, health, and strength, and energy, and buoyancy almost exceed belief." You say also—"I shall rejoice to hear, that your health and spirits are like mine." I will not say much about that. But I think I can say—what I trust will satisfy the genuine sympathy and affectionate zeal of your heart and prayers for me—viz. that, at present, I am not sensible of any desire, on my *own personal account*—of a preference for anything that the Lord does not give me. Since I wrote that letter, I have been much in the habit of something like continual dying, and coming to life again, and of being continually carried forward I know not how. When the frost is not too sharp, I am all on the alert. If the cold increase too much, I am torpid as a dormouse. If it become mild and damp, I lose my girdle, and am universally relaxed. But though all this keeps me from the luxury of knowing what a leisure half-hour means, I am wonderfully carried through daily demands. One day, while I was thinking of you, and of how long it was since I heard from you, or wrote to you, I happened to look at the new Cambridge Almanack: and I determined "to shew it up" the next time I wrote to you. Tell Mr. Almanack-Maker that I am exceedingly angry, that

* Gen. xlix. 24.

he did not bring in a little more of the new building at King's, and then I should either have seen Mr. Simeon every time I went into the vestry, (for my churchwardens treat me with the Cambridge Almanack,) looking out at his window, or have imagined at least that he was just going to throw up the sash. I see you now in the mind's eye, and your domestics. I seem to long after the soul of your female servant. O! that she might be devoted to love Jesus Christ, as she loves her master, and to watch and anticipate his wishes, as she does yours! How fast our dear brethren are called away, younger than you or myself! Some are taken away without the appearance of an attack, and others survive beyond expectation. Well! I know who are best off—they who rest on the bosom of Jesus. May we be animated to “diligence in following them, who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises!” How sweet to steal away, and find oneself, almost before one is aware of it, with Jesus, with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and with one, who was dear to me on earth, and will be inexpressibly dearer there, perfectly conformed to the image of God's dear Son!

‘Well! Mr. J. T. N., now you *have* written to your friend. Don't you pity him for having to wade through such mud and mire?’ I am not provided with any answer but this, that I know it will gratify him, at least, in calling for that, which he has great dexterity in doing—casting the mantle of love over the deficiencies of his friends, yea, even of his unworthy servant.

J. T. N.

LETTER IX.

March 31, 1836.

MY DEAR FRIEND.

Till about a week ago, I never got Thomason's Life into my hand at any moment, when I could give myself up without interruption or restraint to the delight of reading it. The book has so much that brings home the very pabulum of vital religion to the soul; the remarks are so weighty, so applicable, to every important feature of Ministerial and Christian life, whether diurnal or occasional; that I have seldom been so delightfully, and, if it be not my own fault, beneficially, stimulated. The reproofs are as "goads," and the whole spirit exciting and humbling in the highest degree. The only thing to lament is, that it is so short, and that, with all my economy of pleasure, I shall soon be at the end of it.

However, it is one of those pleasures, of which, unlike all other pleasures, the benefit, will, I hope, endure to eternity. Perhaps only eternity will disclose what it has done, in recalling my mind to a consideration of what the Lord does for his people, and what he has done for me, and my flock in particular, by the stunning blows, which he has lately seen fit to lay upon me. I suffer in many respects more and more. But then I rejoice in a still greater degree and extent. I see that the habits of prayer and solemn recollection formed among my people, (viz. their meeting to pray for my dear wife during her illness,) have united them together, and tended, under the Lord's blessing to their establishment, seriousness, spirituality, and separation from the world. The Lord also has

brought me experimentally to know what he can enable me to give up, and how much he can separate me from whatever made earth pleasant, and made me willing to stay here, rather than "to depart, and be with Christ, which is very far better." I do not mean to say, that I am sensible of having attained anything of a more positive willingness to depart. But after a long, stupid, interval, during which I seemed to suffer without any obvious benefit to myself or others, it is a prize indeed to awake, and find, that of all the things about me, every thing is less important to me than it was ; that to every being under my roof I am of less importance ; and that if I were to lie down and die upon the board, on which I now rest my foot, my servants, who are exemplarily kind and dutiful, would not feel like a wife, or a family forlorn and heart-struck ; but could turn about, and, under the Divine blessing, in a short time find themselves as comfortable in some other service.

I had written nearly thus far a fortnight ago, and hesitated about sending what has so much of selfish complaint in it. Though, in fact, that is not the impression I meant to leave on your mind ; but rather the ground for thanksgiving, which the Lord has furnished, by carrying me through the removal of everything, to which I had looked for years as the comfort of daily life to one, who seemed above most men peculiarly to need that sort of social support, and the "dwelling together as heirs of the grace of life." Nor must I forget to tell you how (even after the withdrawal of the first cordial support, with which he sustained me in the more immediate and intense days of my trial) he has still carried me on, and not suffered me to be incapacitated for my public work, nor, I

believe, to shrink from any occasion of Christian society, to which courtesy invited, or business called me.

I know I have more to say. But so I should, if I were to write another sheet.

Your ever affectionate

J. T. N.

LETTER X.

IN REPLY TO A WARM INVITATION TO CAMBRIDGE.

Ipswich, April 25, 1836.

How sweet is your kindness, my dear friend! both to my habitual and actual feelings, at this time, reviving as the gale of spring.

‘Come and teach you!’ The clown teaching harlequin! The sophist lecturing Hannibal on the art of war &c. &c! Nothing humbles me so much as the low state of the affection of pure, genuine, simple-hearted love in my soul. So low, whether I look at God or my dear friends. If I find alleviation of the reflection in anything, it is in feeling that I do indeed lament I have so little; that I am such a clod, a stone, as if nothing—no not the beams of love himself—could quicken me *at this distance*. Blessed be his name! we shall shortly be nearer to him, and then I shall, with some encouragement, try whether I cannot love as well as you. May the full enjoyment, and the increasing source of it be now and ever yours! “He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.” *

* 1 John iv. 16.

Through great mercy, I have had no return of pain since my last, and was enabled to take one service yesterday without fatigue. "Praised be the Lord daily, who helpeth us, and poureth his benefits upon us!" *

Yours to eternity—blessed be God!

J. T. N.

LETTER XI.

ON HIS EARNEST INTENTION TO PREACH AT THE OPENING
OF MR. N'S NEW CHURCH.†

Ipswich, Sept. 25, 1836.

No, my dear father! you must not think of it. I know something of the self-denial it must be to you. But our heavenly Parent says—"No"—and he knows best. It is a privilege, though the exertion of it is painful, to put ourselves out of the hands of our own finite wisdom and tenderness into the management of that which is infinite. Often was I enabled to say during my dear wife's illness—"I know what I would have, if I might. But to be in the Lord's hands is incomparably blessed beyond any specific event." May he give you to feel how

'Sweet to lie passive in his hands,
And know no will but his!'

Ever yours, (and hoping to meet you soon in that blessed world.)

Most affectionately,
J. T. N.

* Ps. lxxviii. 19. P.T.

† See Life of Rev. C. Simeon, pp. 789, 803.

LETTER XII.

Ipswich, Oct. 3, 1836.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Yesterday I was poorly almost the whole day, and in the worst way, my head completely disabled for any thing like distinct thought. To-day I shall endeavour to follow up my scrap of Sunday, and steal again to the side of your couch, and prattle of the things that pertain to the kingdom of God. The cold weather is beginning to lay hold of me, and pierce me ; but this morning is sunshiny, and cheering.

There is a sentence in your welcome and valuable dispatch, that I think I should speak a word to. " I sadly want your ease." Whether you mean the tranquil composure of assurance in committing my friends into the Lord's hands, or whether you intend a too great constitutional immobility, I do not think the idea is applicable to me. I know I do not feel any thing like what I should feel. But neither do I think I am in that sense at ease, when my friends are in pain. Again, I have very little of an approach to the steady tranquillity of an assured faith, in putting them into the hands of divine tenderness and faithfulness. I aim at it. How far I succeed, must be left to " that day." I will not enter upon the difficult task of judging my own self. But as by a closely adhering inaccuracy of expression, I may have made myself appear in your eyes a little different from what I am, I will state a fact or two. One of the dearest, and most truly valuable christian young women, that I have seen in my pilgrimage, was very ill, and great apprehensions were entertained for her life. I prayed

for her, with the usual, yet I thought not insincere, profession of putting her entirely into the Lord's hands. It occurred however in the course of the transaction, (for the Lord was pleased to keep us in suspense for some time,) that I was once thinking what the loss would be, if she were removed, and I became convinced that I had not unreservedly given her up, and I prayed to be enabled to do so, and endeavoured to act in dependence upon an answer to that prayer. In about half an hour came a messenger to say she was better, and she has been spared to be a blessing to all who know her.

Now, after all the deduction, which the correctest spiritual criticism can make for the tendency to attach importance to occurrences connected with one's self, I cannot but think, that here was an instance of the Lord's putting honour upon the faith, which is his own gift; and an intimation to trust the Lord's tenderness in preference to my own, and to set a seal to that word—"Delight thyself in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thy heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass."* It may be said in reply perhaps—"Since that time the Lord has "taken away the desire of your eyes with a stroke," though you profess to have put her also into his hands with the same unreserve. There seems therefore nothing, on consideration of the two cases, to illustrate the doctrine of faith.' But I trust that even in this latter case, the "Lord did give me the desires of my heart." How possible it is, considering what her complaint was, that if I had prayed absolutely for her life, and she had survived, I might have witnessed such protracted agonies, as to

* Psalm xxxvii. 4, 5.

have induced me to join my prayers with hers for her dismissal! Beside, I do not think it unsuitable to say—"If it be possible, let this cup pass from me,"—or to lift up that imploring look, which says—"Lord, thou knowest what I would desire, if I might." And I trust I shall know one day, what I do not now, though I believe it, that he has answered the desires of my heart, and "taken her away from the evil to come." In this spirit and with this hope—persuaded that, though I shall not always have the gratification of my feelings, yet that an unreserved surrender gives the best promise of it, I put you into his hands, and—blessed be his name, I am not disappointed—You "are alive, and remain," and he does not give me "sorrow upon sorrow." And though I will not venture to decide the original question, whether my frame approached that of being too much at ease while you were suffering; one thing I can confidently say—"You shall not tell me I am at ease now." If the Patriarch, when he unbound the cords which he had by faith fastened around his son, delighted in receiving him again; I hope I can enter a little into his joy, as I "receive you again from the dead in a figure," and learn that you are "to the full extent of what the time would admit of—better." I hope that a little of the blood of the father of the faithful flows, however slowly and feebly, in my spiritual veins, and that this joy is the joy of faith. Yet I know that I am the weakest of all human beings, and that I neither know how to bear the hand of the Lord to be laid upon me, nor to be removed, without something of a convulsive agitation, which is not quite the exact movement of a healthy and robust faith; and, if I am sending out a flight of something like extravagances, I shall be happy to put them into the hands of your more

discriminating judgment, and correcter taste, to clip their wings to a due length; and shall truly thank you for your godly jealousy over me. Nothing can well exceed the conviction I have, of how blundering and feeble are my endeavours to “follow them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” But such is my endeavour, and to avoid the adoption of any incorrect *principle*.

I had hoped to have got over to you, but my experiment the other day tried my constitution so much from the coldness of the weather, that I must be content with hearing you are better. I must keep my little strength to make it possible for me to go through my stated demands, and the business of the consecration. I have no certainty when it will be, but suppose probably next week. I had expected that I should have been indulged with the great pleasure of seeing and hearing you, and that, (whereas almost all my doings have been what men of business would consider to be defeats,) I was going for once to enter port with all my sails set. But it is to be, as it has been all my journey—“Ask no questions, but submit.” Pray for me, that I may say what I endeavour to say—“Lord! my soul is even as a weaned child.”*

If your restoration on earth be so precious, what will our meeting in Heaven be! “Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means!” †

Your affectionate

J. T. N.

* Psalm cxxxi. 2.

† 2 Thess. iii. 16.

LETTER XIII.

TO REV. W. CARUS, DURING MR. SIMEON'S LAST ILLNESS.

Oct. 23, 1836.

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,

Accept my warmest and intensest thanks for giving me six lines of such intelligence, when from fatigue and anxiety it must have been difficult for you to grasp a pen. What a sight for a believer to wait on an aged servant of the Lord, and see how infinite love supports him under the dispensations of inscrutable sovereignty! And how incalculably is the interest increased, when the parties are Paul and Timothy—"such a one as Paul the aged, and Timothy, mine own son in the faith!"

I am with you sometimes, and wishing to share the hallowed spiritual atmosphere. But for the most part, lately, I have been unable to realize spiritual things, or indeed anything with any exertion of faculty much beyond that of which we are conscious in a dream. But I am as the Lord appoints; and that is better than anything beside. But I speak of these things, not because I would not rather be entering with you into the sublime thoughts which the grace of God (as you have now the opportunity of contemplating it,) excites and maintains; but because the enumeration of my own circumstances, which is the only thing my dark and feeble brain can reach, is preferable to leaving you by my silence to suppose, that your note (I sent it directly to Old Newton) could have been received by me without feelings of joy and thankfulness, which.

if I were ever so bright, I should with difficulty describe.

Tell our dear Father that I am in a state of vegetation; but that I feel, and send him all the love that a sensitive plant is capable of. Sometimes I get hold of him at the throne of grace. O that these things may be blessed to us, my dear brother, and that we may never forget what the Lord has done for us!

Your affectionate,
J. T. N.

LETTER XIV.

TO REV. W. CARUS.

Early in November, 1836.

MY VERY DEAR BROTHER,

I am and have been very weak, obliged to give up every evening engagement almost from the time of the consecration, from excessive liability to cold. This shuts me up the latter part of the day, and it would be a most interesting occupation occasionally to pour out a little of my heart to you and to our beloved, venerable father, under his present circumstances. But alas! my head is the weakest member of all. I sit stupid, and all but unable to amuse myself even with the lightest reading; beside that every minute of semi-transparency is to be seized for getting on with my ministerial work for the Sabbath. I am often with you in thought at Kings, or turn the steeds of imagination, and transport you all with your precious charge to Ipswich. The Lord knows (for I have told him repeatedly) what an indulgence it would be to me to

see his dear countenance once more in the flesh. But amidst the various fluctuations of feeling (sometimes thinking of his being spared to us on earth, and sometimes of our being happy with him in heaven) something like a not very selfish envy seems the sentiment, into which the current of thought subsides. I can hardly help settling upon the thought, how blessed it will be for him to be in heaven! and my heart would glow with delight to know, that I might lay hold on the skirt of his garment, and be drawn up with him. Earth has been very, very insipid, since she, with whom I feebly endeavoured to walk before God, and who was so eminently calculated to "stir up my mind by way of remembrance," has been taken away. And when he is gone, earth will be sensibly much more insipid. But I am determined, D. V., to be a gainer either way. If he is spared to me, I shall have that comfort for some part, at least, of my wearisome pilgrimage. If he is removed, I shall be stimulated by an additional spur to look with more realizing thoughts to heaven, to "gird up the loins of my mind," and to be a "follower of them, who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises." Give my love to him; and Oh! what would I throw into that word, if I knew as much as he already knows of what love will be in heaven! How privileged a state to have so far ceased from the burdens of mortality as to have nothing to do, but to lie still, and pray, and praise, and be the delighted recipient of Divine love. I marvel not that the tear of Christ (*Lachryma Christi*)* should fall just where it does; for there "he whom Christ loveth is sick." The mention of it, however, reminds me, that I have one or two pints of Malmsey Madeira of a small quantity given us, after it had been in India, and some of which

* Simeon's Life, pp. 305, 320, 321.

was the last wine my dear wife drank, before “ drinking that new wine in the kingdom of God.” If our dear father is spared, and you judge the variety would be pleasing, as connected with endeared remembrances, let me know, and I will send them. I thought of it. But I said—‘ To send *anything*, surrounded as he is by the sentinels of love, would be indeed dispatching coals to Newcastle.’

Tell our dear father that our new Church *will* have some relation to him, for it is Trinity Church, as well as his own. O! that my harp and voice were getting as fast as his towards concert pitch, ready to join, the moment the invisible world is displayed! How blessed to lie on the bosom of the Lord, to hear him interceding with infallible prevalence for those whom we loved on earth; to see, while at the same time Jesus himself “ sees, of the travail of his soul ” in the edification and enlargement of his Church; to witness his satisfaction, and to share in it.

Affectionately yours,
J. T. N.

LETTER XV.

TO REV W. CARUS, AFTER MR. SIMEON'S DEATH.

Ipswich, Nov. 15, 1836.

MY VERY DEAR BROTHER,

I had intended writing to you yesterday, and now I have suffered the post-hour to pass by to-day also. I recollect being told of Mr. ———, that he said, ‘ When I am tired, I read the Revelation ; ’ on the prin-

ciple, I suppose, that "strong drink should be given to him that is ready to perish." And that I may bring forward all that my own experience fairly supplies for the justification of this practice, I must acknowledge, that I have sometimes struggled with tired nature, risen up against overwhelming, quenching infirmity, and have gone to the fountain-head. I have, when feeling the overpowering weakness of John, gone to look at him, who "laid his right hand upon" the beloved, but trembling disciple, and have endeavoured to realize the scene, the action, and the encouraging power of that word—"Fear not; I am the first and the last." "I was, before any one single thing of which you complain, or from which you suffer, or which you apprehend, had a being; and "I am the last." I shall see them all out, and you shall see the day, when there is none of all of them remaining, nothing but myself, and my redeemed, and my whole power exerted to make you and them happy. "I am he that liveth, and," who, to accomplish this object, "was dead," and—to perpetuate it—"am alive for evermore," and—to laugh to scorn all interruption—"I have the keys of hell and of death." '* Or I go to get what hold I can on that view of rest, after all our weary steps, (Rev. vii. 9—17, or xxi. 22, 23.) on which I read our beloved Father's exposition in my family, the night after the consecration. I have the rather let my pen run on, because the train of thought I have been led to, and the passages I have cited, are likely to suit the present state of your mind.

O! my dear brother, I shall never see your face, (and I trust, if I be spared till the return of May, and my life be accompanied with sufficient strength, I shall see it) without seeing another face in vision

* Rev. i. 17, 18.

beside it. He gave me one of the prints taken from the miniature which Mrs. — had ; and I look at it sometimes, till I think I see the lips move. May his mantle descend upon you for the refreshment of your own soul, and the good of your people ; and in every occurrent difficulty or perplexity, may you or they never ask in vain—“Where is the Lord God of Elijah !” I thought of him more distinctly than I had before—though seldom any considerable time absent from my mind”—on Sabbath evening, when I heard the dismissal hymn of his name-sake—“ Lord ! now letteth thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy Word,” &c. He knows now what that word Sabbatism means. Well ! we must “follow his faith, considering the end of his conversation.”* But it is important to view it as an end—the termination of a course†—not as a mere single act. We are not permitted yet to put off our armour ; and while we bear our leader home to the narrow house, as the ancient hero on his shield of faith ; let us remember that the very interment is in the midst of the darts of the enemy, and that we are only somewhat retired from the very thickest of the fight, and must immediately return to the engagement. And in this view let us look back again to Rev. i., and may we repose our whole souls on him, and draw our whole strength from him, “who is the first and the last, who liveth and was dead, and is alive for evermore, and has the keys of hell and of death !”

Dearest brother, the Lord make all grace to abound to you, and the dear people of your charge !

Affectionately yours,

J. T. N.

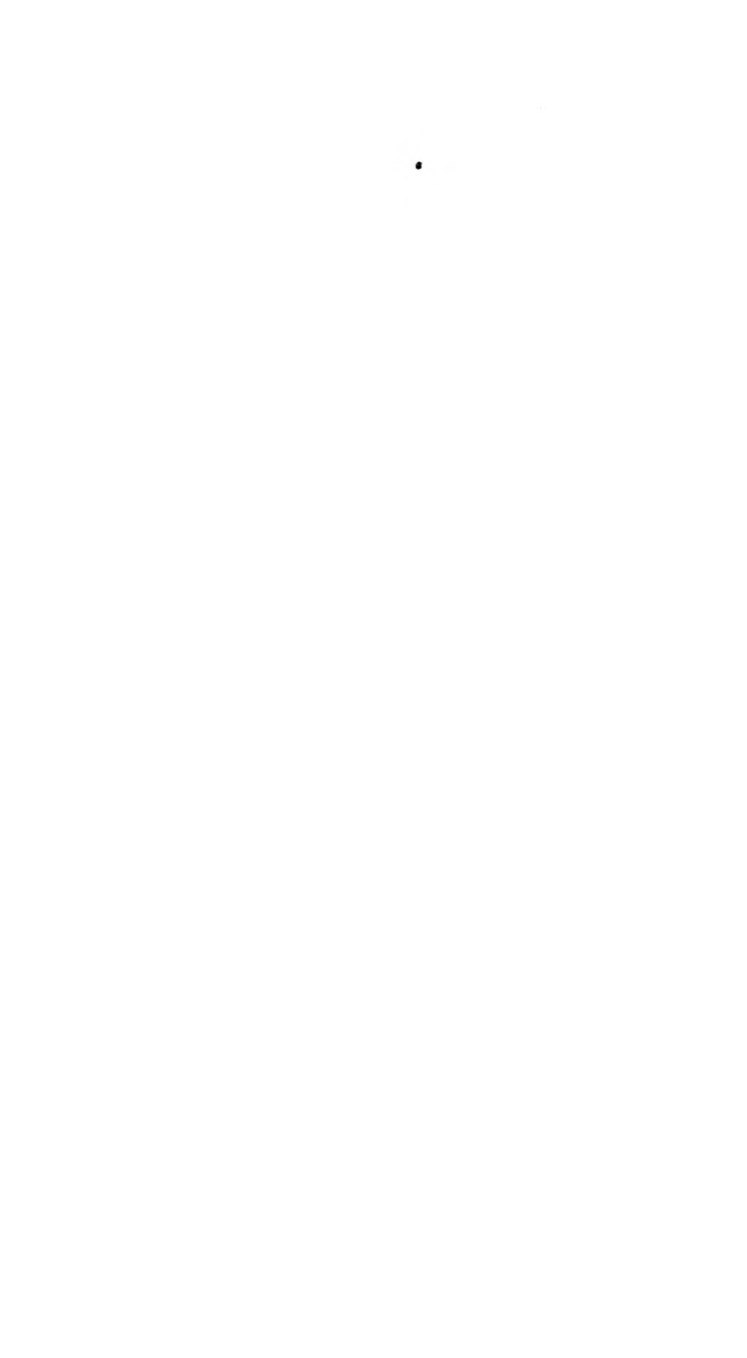
* Heb. xiii. 7.

† 2 Tim. iv. 7.





THE series now to be given contains fragments of a correspondence extending through a period of more than thirty years. The early letters were those of a counsellor, kindly repressing the youthful zeal of his friend, and carefully marking whatever he considered opposed to the practical influence of the Gospel. Soon however, they exhibit the glow of affection, which characterises them to the last, and which was indeed an union of heart, based on the only sure foundation of friendship, and fruitful in its happy privileges.



LETTERS.

LETTER I.

December 13, 1814.

MY DEAR ———.

I am always putting off what I have to do, under a notion that at present I feel very unequal to it, and that at some other opportunity I shall do it well. But I ought never to allow myself in such a thought. I am seldom indulged with that supply of strength and spirits, which is necessary to my accomplishing any thing I undertake (what is popularly called) *well*—though indeed, what we call well ought never to have that term *strictly* applied to it. I ought therefore, perhaps, much more often than I do, to be content to let Mr. Self be seen in his every-day clothes, and trust to that gracious Lord, who is pleased to choose the despised things of the world for the purpose of confounding the mighty, and helping the humble, to make “His strength perfect in my weakness.” In this frame of mind I now sit down, having hastily caught up my pen with the purpose, that you shall (if it may be) have a letter from me of some kind, long or short. So prepare yourself to bear with my folly for half an

hour. The Lord can teach you wisdom by it, if he is pleased to be with me in writing, and you in reading ; and as "He is nigh unto all them that call upon him in truth ;" do you beg a blessing on the perusal, as I have on the writing.

Our conversations have chiefly turned on some particular difficulty, that has pressed upon your mind at the time of our meeting ; and I fear I have seldom been able to furnish you with the degree of satisfaction, which you probably expected (because you wished) from my conversation. I shall not now advert to any particular trials, with which at different times I have found you exercised, but endeavour a remark or two that may apply to them all. I shall beg of you therefore, under whatever dispensation you are, or in whatever frame of mind, to remember, that the Lord in his dealings with us has usually three objects principally in view.—'To humble the sinner, to exalt the Saviour, and to promote holiness.' Whatever has this tendency will always be welcomed by the regenerate mind. And surely, whoever knows his own heart, must be very distinctly aware, that such an effect is far more likely to be produced by trials, and crosses, and occurrences "not joyous" to our natural feelings, "but grievous," than by being carried on in a uniform train of agreeable circumstances, and by success in our plans of outward service in the Lord's cause.

When our hearts are first impressed with the evil of sin, and the goodness of God ; and when to this succeeds a mourning at the universal abounding of iniquity in the world, and a desire to shew ourselves on the Lord's side, "in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation," we call on every faculty of soul and body, and employ ourselves and all that we can influence in this good work. So far as this proceeds

from a single desire to "shew forth the praises of him, that hath called us" (we hope) "out of darkness into his marvellous light," it is well; and so far we may warrantably suppose that he approves it. But we must remember, that in no case is it more necessary to guard against the subtle and corrupt insinuations of self-pleasing, and self-seeking, than when we are engaged in the cause of religion. Pleased with what we do; pleased with what we hazard; pleased with what we suffer; there is great danger, lest the young and inexperienced should be as much intoxicated with themselves, and the success of their plans in conducting spiritual designs, as they could possibly be with the most worldly pursuit, in which they could be engaged and absorbed.

Again—young professors are not the persons calculated to stand in the gap against the incursion of evil in the church, or the assaults of it from the world. And if they are called out too soon, or to speak more properly, drawn out by appearances (which they judge sufficient intimations)—but in reality before they are providentially called to the service they have in view; they not uncommonly betray their incompetency, by embarking in situations of responsibility beyond their power to grapple with; and the cause suffers, and the enemy prevails, through their inexperience.

How gracious then is our Master and Shepherd, who suits his dealings to prevent these evils, and to restrain us from doing harm to ourselves and others under the notion of doing good! His method of accomplishing it is generally either by holding in youthful zeal with a strong hand, till it is ballasted and regulated with a greater proportion of knowledge and experience; or else to suffer it to run itself out of breath, or into difficulties.

How gracious then (again I say) is our Master to you especially, who has taken the former of these methods with you, and kept you again and again; and not suffered you "to run as uncertainly, nor fight as one that beateth the air!"* Thus he gradually uses you, by short breathing exercise, to a greater promise of speed and success, when he sends you forth, and to a greater skill and dexterity in the use of your spiritual weapons, by inuring you to the most difficult struggle—fighting with yourself. For those who early wear out their first zealous impressions, often sit down in lukewarm formality for ever. Or if they run into difficulties, they scandalize and dishearten both themselves and others. You do not know, my dear — (for nothing but grace and experience can teach you) what a blessing it is "to bear the yoke in youth." What humility, and strength, and activity, and perseverance in future service is often to be traced back to this, under God, as its cause! That desire to serve God, which outlives many a disappointment in its endeavours, may be depended on; and the man goes forth, conscious that there is not so much allowed idolatry of self. In the mean time, he has gained much experience, and he not only wishes to do good, but, humanly speaking, he knows where, and how it may probably be accomplished. He has been employed in arranging materials, not to be wrought up for immediate use, and to turn to immediate credit; but from a sober, thoughtful consideration, and settled conviction of their suitableness for the ends he has in view—the glory of God, and the good of souls. He has "believed," and therefore he has not "made haste:" and as this belief is not maintained through a discouraging interval without many exercises and trials,

* 1 Cor. ix. 26.

there is a fund accumulated, out of which your conversation may relieve many a weary, burdened soul, and you may be the instrument of comforting and instructing others. Be content then to wait your time. Lose nothing of your zeal for serving the best of Masters. But till he opens a door for you, let it be employed in watching the movement of your own mind, and "bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." Self-denial and taking up the cross daily, are the first lessons in his school; indispensable requisites for admission into it, and laying the foundation for all that follow. "O tarry thou the Lord's leisure; be strong, and he shall stablish thine heart; and put thou thy trust in the Lord!" *

Now forgive me as soon as you can, and as soon after as you can, write to me, and give a long account of yourself and your dear relatives. Kind remembrances to all, which I trust you to distribute properly.

Yours faithfully,

J. T. N.

LETTER II.

April 26, 1816.

MY DEAR ———,

Your letter gives what we call a poor account of yourself. Yet I think I must say to you (i. e. conditionally, if you are improving your means and opportunities) what the Lord said of the Smyrnesse Church — "I know thy poverty, but thou art rich." † Your sickness may keep you sometimes from the means of

* Psalm xxvii. ult. P. T.

† Rev. ii. 9.

grace. But the Lord can preach a better and more effectual sermon to you at home than perhaps some dozens that you have heard at Church when more at ease. Or if you go with a languid frame and a headache,—this sometimes prepares you, under grace, to reap more from the only one sentence you can remember perhaps out of a whole discourse, than the most orderly meditation upon the most accurate recollection of it would at other times supply.

“ For all I thank thee ; most for the severe.”*

has *much* wisdom in it. And Hezekiah said truly, when he said—“ By these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit.” † And if the Lord sanctifies these things, “ to humble and to prove, and to do us good at the latter end ;” ‡ how much cause shall we have to rejoice, that this was our path, instead of that persevering industry and brilliant success, which even in spiritual things, often endangers those who are indulged with it ! We do not always grow, when we seem to grow ; and often we do *grow*, when we appear to be quite stationary.

I feel now at the end of my tether. I have not an idea more. Commend us kindly to all.

May the Lord shine upon you, and bless you ! Pray for us, and believe me,

Faithfully Yours,
J. T. N.

* Young.

† Is. xxxviii. 16.

‡ Deut. viii. 16.

LETTER III.

ON THE RIGHT USE OF THE MEANS OF GRACE.

Ioswich, Nov. 19, 1822.

MY DEAR _____,

May our gracious Lord be present with me; and having taken up my pen, may I not lay it down again, without having suggested something which may tend to exalt Him in both our hearts! To "grow in grace" the apostle Peter seems to state as synonymous with "growth in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."* I shall endeavor to recal the train of thought into which your letter led me, when I first received it, which is usually, I think, the moment when, if one has time, one would choose to answer a letter. You say—" 'But little leisure' is an ill-omened phrase to a Christian ear." It certainly may be so from the inference, which experience leads one tacitly to attach to it, and which I would hope is not so much to be drawn in your case as in most—that the complainant does not make use of the leisure he has. I seldom seem to suffer from want of leisure, or from mere locomotion of body. No situation has been more favorable to me occasionally, for serious meditation or prayer, than a stage-coach. And on the other hand, I have repeatedly found myself starving in the midst of a profusion of outward means and ordinances. It comes to this; that the spiritual presence of Jesus in the soul (which he confers, and reveals in an instant) can fill the heart with indescribable delight,

* 2 Peter iii. 18.

from the apprehension of his fulness and all-sufficiency, under circumstances of the greatest outward interruption and even discomfort. And unless we can behold him, all exterior helps are only like windows when it is dark. They can transmit, but not originate, either light or prospect. We know, in fact, how it is in other things. It is the subject, not the circumstances, that occupies, interests, transports, overwhelms. No business, no hurry, no time, no place can drive away the remembrance of the loss of an only son, or dear friend ; nor can it withhold us, when the Spirit directs us to the foot of the cross, from "looking on him whom we have pierced, and mourning." We do not want to get a closet or an oratory. Nor do we more need the preparation of retirement to hear by faith those transporting words—"Thy sins are forgiven thee ; go in peace, and sin no more." So far as I live a life of faith, and realize things unseen, so far I find my soul refreshed and strengthened. And then means and instruments come in in their subordinate and proper place. But they are always in danger of intruding too much ; and thus I find myself incumbered with help. A crowd of connoisseurs are hiding the exquisite picture from my eyes, and distracting my attention by their interfering and often contradictory remarks. I hope that past mistakes in this way are bringing me to seek the presence of Christ more simply and constantly, and I hope I can say, that since this has been the case, I have found a distinct improvement in the habitual state of my soul : I do not speak of much attainment in degree, but I am satisfied it is an improvement in the way and plan of providence.

Here, ——, I have got to the end of time and paper, and seem to have done little more than to have written one long sentence. If this is a scanty allow-

ance in return for your close-written and affectionate dispatch, I can only say, dear —— does not receive so much in three years as I have now written to you.

With affectionate recollections to all.

Yours,
J. T. N.

LETTER IV.

ON USEFUL PREACHING.

Ipswich, Jun. 24, 1825.

MY DEAR ——,

I hardly know how to find time or mind to write a letter. My Ministerial demands are not only equally important at all times; but I find that to do even a little towards executing my obligations, with anything like distinct hope of getting to the people's understandings, requires almost incessant thought and labour. For I see, that not only sermons carelessly prepared, but even those, with which the most pains are taken, are heard without having even elementary information in the understanding, or the resemblance of impression in the heart. Indeed all must begin in the understanding; and this is not sufficiently attended to. Uninformed hearers cannot admit an idea, till it is put in a plainer form than ever I found it in books, or heard it from pulpits *in general*. There are illustrious exceptions. Yet the Lord will not suffer his people to perish, and therefore he overrules these things. But no thanks to most teachers. They are mostly understood rather in spite of, than by means of,

their mode of teaching.* Well, I must break off, and look to some other opportunity to say more.

Your affectionate,
J. T. N.

LETTER V.

ON THE EXPERIMENTAL READING OF THE SCRIPTURES.

Ipswich, Feb. 3, 1826.

MY DEAR ——,

It is truly gratifying to hear, that you savour the word of God with so much more relish, when undiluted by human comment. Indeed, all our object in the word itself should be, concentration, instead of dilution, endeavouring always to taste and imbibe the Divine love, and that precious Saviour, who is the essence of the whole Scripture. “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” † And as it has been conjectured, that our natural food nourishes, not in proportion to its actual quantity, but to the amount of saccharine material that it contains; so it is with different portions of the word of God, that are at any time presented to the mind. So far as the Lord Jesus is manifested by the Spirit, and “mixed with faith” in reading, hearing, or meditation, so far the soul is

* On this important gift of the Pulpit Ministry, no one was more alive than himself to his own deficiencies. On one occasion, when discussing the difficulties of composition, he remarked, with his characteristic energy—‘I find it one of the hardest things in the world to drive a straight furrow. If I speak of deep things, my plough sticks. If I aim to be simple, it flies above the surface, and I speak to the air. Or from one cause or another I turn to the right hand or to the left.’

† Rev. xix. 10.

nourished. The believing acceptance of him, and reliance upon him, in all his offices, are the strength of the soul. They give patient confidence, enable us to suffer and to serve, and lift up the desires of the soul, not only above all worldly trials, and interruptions, and distractions, but above the very best too that we have in a state of grace, and make the believer, though patiently waiting and thankfully enjoying his present blessings, “willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord.” *

Believe me,

yours,

J. T. N.

LETTER VI.

ON THE ILLNESS OF HIS WIFE.

March 3, 1826.

Your letter, my dear ——, has just reached me, and I shall endeavour to answer immediately, (be it much or little) that I may not leave myself at the mercy of interruptions, and—by purposing to write more to the point in future—allow myself to be prevented for an indefinite time.

Your situation is truly distressing. I cannot let the thought of anything serious happening to my wife, pass through my mind without feeling my heart sink. But I have two considerations that tend to relieve

* 2 Cor. v. 8.

me. It is the Lord's Scriptural description of himself, that "he doth not willingly afflict, nor grieve the children of men." * This is transcribed into your experience and mine. "Goodness and mercy have followed us all the days of our lives, and embraced us on every side." † And therefore I comfort myself with the thought, that all the indulgence of our feelings, and all the gratification of our reasonable wishes, that is consistent with his glory and our real happiness, the Lord will infallibly secure to us : and that if we are looking to him, and acknowledging him in every thing, he will "add no sorrow therewith." Whatever he sends shall have the character and effect of the tenderest parental chastening ; heightening all our blessings, and endearing his love in bestowing them ; leading us nearer and more continually to a throne of grace, and manifesting in a more convincing and persuasive manner, our "adoption by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." Again—suppose the worst, or what in the language of mortals we call so—"If I am bereaved," what is the conclusion ? that a wiser love than conjugal love, or self-love, has done the very best for my partner, and me. If I knew at this time what was the appointed date of my dear wife's existence on earth, and even knew that I was to continue here long after she is removed, could I wish her to be exposed for a longer time to the endurance of a body of sin and death, exposure to temptation, and all the dangers and conflicts, which beset a soul carrying the burden of the flesh in this corrupt world ? What should I feel, if even I did wish such a thing, and the wish were granted for my correction and rebuke ? The first time

* Lam. iii. 33.

† Ps. xxiii. 6 ; xxxii. 10. P.T.

I saw her afterwards suffering temptation, or giving way to any wrong feeling—‘You might now have been a glorified spirit beyond the reach of all this for ever; and I have been the cause of your being detained in this miserable world!’

If therefore I wish for relief from one of the most painful anxieties that can enter the mind, I can find it only in leaving the matter by prayer, without conditions, or limitations, to the infinite love of God in Christ.

The Lord has given you a proof, that he does not forget or neglect you in the late event. There are many supposable turns, which such a transaction might have taken, that might have produced endless disquietude, and none that could have terminated with such complete satisfaction to yourself, or with so much distinct proof of the Lord’s superintendence and interposition.

Let us then “commit ourselves” to him by prayer and faith, “in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator,” and through the Son of his love—our infinitely merciful Redeemer. The closer we examine all his dealings in times past, the more clearly we see love and mercy written upon them. His name—His nature—is love; and the more we wait on him in close communion by prayer and meditation, under the leadings of his Spirit; the more we shall see of the manifestations of this love. And where faith is too weak to see, it must have patience to wait, till the difficulties are cleared up. Then we shall say beyond a doubt, “He hath done all things well.” “He led them by the right way.”*

May the Lord dwell in you by his Spirit, and you

* Mark vii. 37. Ps. cvii. 7.

in him by faith. He that dwelleth in God, dwelleth in love ; and the influence of that love in trials is to soothe and encourage, as well as to support and strengthen.

Your affectionate,
J. T. N.

LETTER VII.

ON THE SUBSEQUENT DEATH OF HIS WIFE.

Ipswich, March 17, 1826.

MY DEAR ———,

May our gracious Lord enable me to speak a word in season, under your present overwhelming trial ! And I the rather address myself to the attempt of writing a few lines, in hope of his gracious assistance ; because I do feel, that he perhaps did dictate in some measure what I last wrote, under circumstances not favourable either to the warmth, or clearness, with which I certainly desired to have written on so important, and painfully interesting, a subject.

“ In every thing give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” * Now let us, dear ———, consider some of the materials for thanksgiving, which the Lord has afforded you in this dark and perplexing dispensation.

First — He is glorified. “ Precious in his sight is the death of his saints.” † That they should be carried through trials in life, and fitted by them for future

* 1 Thess. v. 18.

† Ps. cxvi. 15.

services, and upheld under them so as to manifest much of the power of his grace outwardly, is comparatively but a small display of his glory. The eye can see, the heart can conceive and approve, this intelligently. The faith of the subject, or the observers, is comparatively but little exercised in that highest act of faith, resigning every thing with absolute, implicit, submission, and self-denying satisfaction, into the love, wisdom, and faithfulness of a covenant God. But where little is seen but excessive bodily weakness, struggling with apparently overwhelming agony, and the power of faith is exercised, while the expressions of it are manifested with less comparative frequency; there the Divine power in maintaining it is most eminently conspicuous, and God is glorified, not so much in the sight of men, as to the more intelligent perceptions of the highest orders of angels, who see, admire, and adore, these wonders of Divine grace and power. This may perhaps explain to us, why the Lord is pleased to remove many of his most eminent servants, under circumstances of great weakness, and almost imbecility, in which they can express little, or in situations, where no companions of their hope of immortality witness their dismissal—A pauper for instance, attended perhaps by some hired, ignorant, ungodly nurse, or Lazarus without any attendant at all. Thus our Lord told Peter—after he had committed to him “the lambs whom he carries in his bosom,” and the sheep for whom he laid down his life—“by what death he should glorify God” *—crucified in the midst of unbelieving, persecuting heathen. And thus perhaps those seasons of extremity of pain, which were laid upon your dear wife, were the very seasons,

* John xxi. 15—19.

in which the Lord was most eminently, though less conspicuously to human view, glorified in upholding her; and he would not dismiss her, till he had gotten the full glory of this part of his dispensation. What a privilege shall we one day see in those words—"Unto you it is given, (Gr.) in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake."*

Then she is safe. How meekly triumphant is that rejoicing over death—"Almighty God, with whom do live the spirits of them that depart hence in the Lord, and with whom the souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, are in joy and felicity; we give thee hearty thanks, for that it hath pleased thee to deliver this our sister out of the miseries of this sinful world."† What an immense subject of consolation it is, and to be plucked out of the very heart of your sufferings, that you can say of each pang, as it is successively inflicted and endured—"If she had been the mourning survivor, this must have been her portion. But now she is out of the reach of any thing like this, completely, and for ever." And exercise faith on the blessedness of "the rest that remaineth,"—for ever remaineth—"for the people of God."‡

But I must hasten to a conclusion, I began yesterday morning early, and was soon afterwards crippled for the whole day by an attack, which for the time shattered my nerves very powerfully, and of which I still feel the enfeebling effects, though I am better to-day.

What a subject is such an affliction as yours, for prayer as well as thanksgiving! "We meekly beseech

* Phil. i. 29.

† Burial Service.

‡ Heb. iv. 9.

thee, O Father, to raise us from the death of sin to the life of righteousness." * And here I feel that I ought to drop my pen ! For I seem yet to have to begin separation from the world, and a life of communion with God. Observe, my dear ——, I do not mean to deny or undervalue what the Lord has done for me, in making me willing, in some measure, to seclude myself, and seek communion with him, and struggle even faintly to get back to him from the perpetual wanderings of my heart, and to wait, and aim at the removal of every interruption, that still hinders more constant communion with the Lord. And for yourself, may he enable you to improve the season, when the world appears in its nakedness and emptiness, to get nearer to the Redeemer, and " abide in him ; that when he shall appear, you may have confidence before him." † Oh ! it is nothing less than a continual hard struggle to be a Christian. Jesus hath done all the meritorious work. But he sees not fit to spare us the constant discipline of his scholars and soldiers.

I am unwilling to delay any further, having been already so much interrupted, though I am sensible how crude and deficient this scrawl is. But it is at least a proof, that I would say something, that might be a word in season if I could ; and it affords me the opportunity of assuring you, that I am,

Your affectionate,
J. T. N

* Burial Service.

† 1 John ii. 28.

LETTER VIII.

Ipswich, July 15, 1826.

MY DEAR ———,

I have not only wished to write to you, but to propose, when you could spare time, a few days retreat to Ipswich. But I am really “pressed above measure” by daily engagements. And such is my langour, that it always seems to require all the indulgence I can have : and not only *arrangement*, but even diminution, of employment, produces no more leisure. But I must not lay my pen down without a word, at least, on those things, for which alone it is worth while to live, and for which it is abundantly worth while to die. Give me a line as soon as you can, and tell us what has been the characteristic complexion of your spiritual experience since your last interesting dispatch.

Remember what the Lord has done, and the unavoidable inference. He has dealt with you in no common way ; and it is to prepare you for no common services to your fellow-heirs of the kingdom of glory, and your fellow-citizens of the kingdom of grace. I do not mean to point out those things, which Christians of common views call great, and which they aim at, when they are particularly impressed with any providential event, or any powerful suggestion. But I mean what alone is great in the eyes of angels, and the God of angels—the improvement (without any more effort than the intense action of “the evidence of things not seen”) of the opportunities of daily life for rising above, and living above, present things—the unceasing study how to detain before the mind the

most influential motives for accomplishing this—and the recalling and re-imprinting those impressions, which you received at the moment that faith, while standing by the grave, looked through it to the accomplishment of the blessedness, and the anticipated enjoyment of glory. The meditative wisdom, which is necessary for this, and the practical dexterity which is effectual to carry it on—the spiritual plodding, which does not disdain to save distinct and isolated minutes for these purposes, and to realize a heap of spiritual advancement by individual and infinitesimal atoms—all this is a science, an art, and a pursuit, which I apprehend very few persons understand.

The accumulation of acts in some degree spiritual, and the formation of habits in some degree spiritual, is not so uncommon. But the refinement, which aims at the highest degree of spirituality, and which knows how to distinguish it from the mere barren abstraction, austerity, or sensibility, which often counterfeit its character, is not common. And therefore it is not common to find those, who can say—“The life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.”*

With ——’s very kind regards,

Believe me, your affectionate

J. T. N.

LETTER IX.

Tunbridge Wells, Sept. 11, 1826.

MY DEAR ——,

I bless our gracious God, who has returned you to

* Gal. ii. 20.

your stated engagements in peace and safety, and that you were enabled to keep the eye of faith upon him, when all was dreary to the eye of sense. Let us but interpret every cloud upon our earthly prospects, as intended to awaken our attention to a different prospect; and we shall be prepared to fall in with the Lord's designs, while he is "perfecting that which concerneth us, and giving us an expected end." He is indeed "full of grace and truth." For myself I am much as I have been. The same languor hangs about me. "The Lord reigneth, and blessed be his holy name for ever, and ever!"

Affectionately yours,

J. T. N.

LETTER X.

ON FAMILY AFFLICTION.

Ipswich, Nov. 13, 1826.

MY DEAR ———,

I should grieve, if I dared, or indeed if I thought that even kindness itself would allow me to grieve, at the account you give of your dear family. But, indeed, I suppose it is very possible (and many scriptures sweetly illustrate it) to feel tenderly for those we love under their trials; while our love to them would not allow us to alter a single circumstance without the Lord's permission; or, in other words, that we would not interfere with the plan of infinite love and wisdom for securing their present and eternal happiness. Epaphroditus was quite overwhelmed to think what

his friends at a distance must have suffered formerly, "hearing that he was sick" *—a lovely instance of Christian sensibility! Do give us a line shortly, that we may have early information of any improvement.

I am now going to lecture, and I have not yet finished my preparation.

I am to say something on the meekness of the Lord Jesus. What an immeasurable subject! How far from being, as Chalmers speaks, "overtakeable!" My object, however, is to excite my hearers, and myself, to build ourselves up in the faith of the inexhaustible tenderness and condescension, meekness and patience of the Redeemer, that, relying without limit or distrust, we may find rest unto our souls.

But I must for this purpose break off, with my wife's kindest remembrances to yourself and all.

Your affectionate
J. T. N.

LETTER XI.

THE SAME.

Ipswich, March 19, 1827.

MY DEAR ———,

Your letter gave materials for sorrow, and for joy. "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted." † How gracious then is our Lord, who brings us into that mourning, which we should find some continual excuse for avoiding, if it were left to

* Phil. ii. 25, 26.

† Matt. v. 4.

ourselves! Perhaps if we afflicted ourselves more on account of sin (of course I do not mean Pharisaical mortification, but evangelical, godly, tender concern) we should not so often be afflicted. And since we are so slow to mourn, and keep ourselves awake on this subject, how we ought to "bless the Lord, who giveth us counsel, and causeth our reins to chasten us!" *

March is generally a trying month to me also. On the whole, I think, with much less pain than formerly. I have more constant languor; and though carried through the most imperative engagements of every day, I get more habitually an invalid, and more sensibly an elderly gentleman.

Your affectionate
J. T. N.

LETTER XII.

Ipswich, Jan. 19, 1828.

MY DEAR —,

My retirement is in all respects, but the consideration of my parish, a great indulgence. I get more time for myself (though alas, how poorly is it improved!) than I have had for years. And I hope I have found, that the Lord has been pleased, in some measure, to bless it. Oh! that I did "open my mouth" and heart "wider;" and then I know I should be more replenished! O that I could live every moment "by faith on the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me!" Then existence

* Psalm xvi. 7.

and delight would be one idea expressed by different terms. Even the body of sin and death could not hinder me from singing the song of triumph, even before the final achievement of the victory; for it is sure, though it is not done. Well! a spark of this faith is worth worlds—Lord! breathe upon it, and fan it into a flame. I did not know my wife had given you a challenge about the Psalms. Well! if we agree to love the Lord Jesus, and wait for him, we have a point of union, and an invariable one, though we may not see eye to eye in some subordinate matters. Nothing you can say will do, but “what thou wilt, when thou wilt, as thou wilt”—nothing else, dear ——, if we mean to be happy. I am always so, when I let the Lord choose for me, never else. How is your dear little relic? Our blessed Jesus watch over you and bless you both and all in ——.

Mrs. N. unites in affectionate remembrances,

Yours ever,

J. T. N.

LETTER XIII.

HIS ESTIMATE OF TRUE AND FAITHFUL MINISTERS.

Dec. 6, 1823.

MY DEAR ——,

I am grieved that I cannot write letters. But so it is. I do but just manage to live, and get on badly with daily work. The work of the Ministry is awfully important. I do not mean slavishly so. I am thankful to say, that I feel every succeeding year, and al-

most month, that it is impossible to do any thing, or have any comfort, or feel the dignity of being permitted to live and die in the service of my Lord, without "meditating upon these things, and giving myself wholly to them." * I feel with you, that in such case, or in any case, that interrupts a friendly correspondence, formed on the principles, which unite the hearts of Christians, it is futile to think for a moment of the existence of any want of warmth of attachment.

I had no time when I began. I must now steal no more than to say, that I am mercifully as to health—tough imbecility, which is always on the ground, but never quite destroyed. But I go on, constantly employed, and never, if possible, hurry or over-work myself. Faith is tried somewhat now by the removal of two of my fellow-labourers, and no distinct prospect of supply. But I would rather wait till this day twelvemonth, and trust that share of my people to the immediate teaching of the Lord, without Ministerial intervention; than have any of the fluttering Evangelicals, or any man but one, who like Whitfield or Wesley, can "travail in birth for souls." A student, or a mere preacher, or even a man who merely visited even the whole population without the devoted spirit of one always living and acting under the constraining influence of Christ and souls, would only distress me the more, the more complete he might be in other respects.

Affectionately yours.

J. T. N

* 1 Tim. iv. 15.

LETTER XIV.

UNDER FAMILY AFFLICTION.

Ipswich, Sept. 26, 1832.

MY DEAR ———,

Were I at the beginning of Christian or Ministerial experience, I might tremble to look on such a trial as yours, and say to myself, how can light shine out of this darkness, or such sorrow be turned into joy? But I consider how often those things which have seemed almost to extinguish hope, have been followed by, or have occasioned, the most satisfactory events of my life; and that I have also witnessed in others what I have experienced myself; I know not how to think any cloud so dark, but that it may give place to the brightest display of the Divine mercy and loving-kindness; nor any occurrence so decided in its character of infliction, as not to bring, in a measure, under the wonder-working conduct of Divine appointment, its own balm along with it. And it is delightful to us to find, that this is in your case not only possible, but actual. We read your letter at breakfast, and were on our knees with our poor petitions almost as soon as we had finished our meal. May the Lord abundantly bless and sanctify these heavy trials to your dear partner and yourself, and to the connexions of both!

O that, as we draw nearer and nearer (as fast as time can carry us) to that great, that unspeakably important day, we may be prepared by the anticipations of hope and desire, as well as of watchful jealousy over our

hearts and lives, to “meet the Lord in the air, and have confidence before him at his coming!”

Your affectionate,
J. T. N.

LETTER XV.

AFTER THE DEATH OF MRS. N.

Ipswich, July 7, 1835.

MY DEAR —,

I have seldom passed many days since the arrival of your letter without wishing to answer it.

For myself, I am as well as in this world I can hope to be. My health better than usual; and when I look to “my Rock, my goodness, and my fortress,” “I have all things, and abound.” But I cannot forget, that once I had “the Lord for my shepherd,” and that He was pleased moreover to give me the best of his gifts in this world beside. “Thou didst hide thy face from me, and I was troubled.” The Lord grant that it may be my employment for the rest of life, to “cry and make my supplication to him!”* “The Lord gave,”—O what a gift!—But I did not sufficiently prize, or improve it, “and he hath taken it away. Blessed in both be the name of the Lord!”† In all that respects natural feelings and the enjoyment of this world, I have had my day; and it is past. But if I be but willing, the Lord’s blessing in giving me such a partner, and fellow-heir of eternal life, is yet

* Ps. xxx, 7, 8.

† Job i. 21.

to be continued and increased as long as I live. He sent her as his messenger, and my guide and companion, on the road to a blessed eternity. She is no longer my companion; but the attraction, which was once divided, and drew me partly towards the end, and partly made the journey too pleasant to allow me to wish the end either for her or myself, so intensely as I ought,—that attraction is now all towards the end. “Be not slothful, but a follower of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”*

Pray for me. I saw the addition to your family in the “Record,” and I heard with delight from Mrs. — that your dear wife, who was very delicate, I thought, when I saw her last, was looking in good health.

Come that blessed time, when “the inhabitant shall no more say—I am sick.” †

Your affectionate,

J. T. N.

LETTER XVI.

Feb. 25, 1836.

MY DEAR ———,

Often have I wished to get a little time for the “things, wherewith we may edify one another.”

But I am hurried forward by such an overwhelming feeling of being always too late, that I seem hardly to know what a minute of leisure means. A certain frame and feeling, which I designate by no other term

* Heb. vi. 12.

† Is. xxxiii. 24.

than that of helplessness, seems beyond every other species of suffering—inconvenience or defect, to characterize every thought, word, and action, and to leave its marks upon every actual exertion of the mind, every utterance, and every proceeding. Other aberrations and defects, though very abundant, are comparatively partial in their operation. But every effort is accompanied and followed with the sense of having moved, and with the result of having employed a paralyzed limb. And the accumulating consequences of a life of such crippled movements strew my whole path, till they obstruct my progress, and cut off the prospect of improvement. Yet, so far as this is independent of my own voluntary acquiescence or aggravation, I can say—"It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good." As respects every thing in the world, you may well suppose that it is to me about as insipid, and more insipid, than words can express. But then consider "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus;" and what an unspeakable privilege it is to have the world made insipid to us! I was one of the very richest, I am now one of the very poorest men, on earth. But my treasure is not annihilated, nor is it taken from me. It is more specified as to its existence. It is abundantly increased in value; and it is placed where it can never be in danger, and where I hope shortly to be, and to enjoy it. Then to think of her being for ever free from all possibility of sin or suffering! Not a single moment one feeling of uneasiness of any kind! And sometimes, when I can anticipate my deliverance from the burden of the flesh, it seems an encouragement, a lift, and a foretaste to think, that half of me is already glorified.

But I find writing wearisome, and thinking impos-

sible, and I had better conclude. Believe me, with kindest regards to Mrs. ——.

Your affectionate

J. T. N.

LETTER XVII.

Ipswich, Nov, 19, 1833.

My DEAR ——.

Tell me about your Dover trip, and your continental trip. And tell me about heaven. I sadly want quickening. I did hope that, when I was left alone, I should turn my heart in good earnest to seek communion with God only. And so I think it might have been, the Lord favouring, if my head had not been ruined by a complaint, habitual and constitutional, which destroys the exercise of thought, and an equally constitutional depression of spirits. They, who have known me from my youth, might just have foretold, that when the great blessing, which first made me feel conscious existence and exertion was taken away, I should sink into the cheerless, helpless, ruined thing I was before. But “the Lord liveth, and blessed be my strong helper, and let the God of my salvation be exalted!” *

Commend me to your dear wife, mother, and sisters.

Your ever affectionate,

J. T. N.

* Psalm xviii. 46.

LETTER XVIII.

Ipswich, Nov. 30, 1830.

MY DEAR ———,

Your kind and affectionate communication revived in a mind, that has seen better days, a momentary sense of former interest and animation. But these feelings are with me now as the ‘hectic of a moment.’ Indeed, I could, in some degree, leave feelings to care for themselves, if I knew what was my actual practical path under the present circumstances of the unfitness, which arises from great infirmity and confusion of intellect for all that I have to put my hand to. Depression of spirits is a great evil. But I think I should, D. V. be able to encounter that, were it not for “taking counsel in my soul,”* as to how to seek the path of daily duty, and finding none.

“I know my Heavenly Father’s judgments are right, and that in faithfulness He hath afflicted me.” † But I am placed in such circumstances in consequence, that I know not what the rod speaks, nor what is the path to be taken to improve the dispensation, or, (as it appears) to prevent my misusing it to my great discomfort, and the injury to the Lord’s service.

However, the only thing you can do is to pray for me; and that I entreat of you. Kindest and most affectionate remembrances.

Your affectionate,
J. T. N.

* Psalm xiii. 2.

† Psalm cxix. 75.

LETTER XIX.

CONGRATULATION ON THE BIRTH OF A CHILD.

Ipswich, June 3, 1841.

Yes, dear ——, you shall have a line at the only right moment to answer a letter, where it happens to be practicable—I mean the moment after you have received it. All blessing be on you, and your dear wife, and her new-found treasure. May our gracious Jesus look upon the soul that He has put in that little body—as yet a fallen creature, “dead in trespasses and sins”—with the same sentiment, with which he spake to the disciples on earth—“I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you!” * May He be pleased to do this, as early as the infant, by the new-creating power of His Spirit, can be expanded to receive Him, and praise be perfected out of the mouth of another “babe and suckling!” †

I have only time to add my kindest regards to Mrs T. and that I am

Affectionately yours,
J. T. N.

LETTER XX.

ON THE EVE OF DEATH OF AN EARLY FRIEND OF MRS. N.

Ipswich, May 28, 1844.

MY DEAR ——,

Your letter reached me just before I had to leave

* John xiv. 18.

† Matt. xxi. 16.

my house, and was read while walking to the place to which I was going. There I had to see a few dying people, and then to attend a meeting for a petition of our clergy in this archdeaconry, against the "Dissenters' Chapels Bill." I then returned tired, and have not recovered any disposable power of mind since. Indeed after a certain time of life, I suppose that the susceptible and the active powers both of the intellect and affections become either so worn, or paralyzed, that they forget their functions. Yet perhaps this very experience may not altogether unfit me for sympathizing with you, though it does for the prospect of suggesting any thing of a consolatory tone. But though I would ardently minister to the soothing of your feelings, I desire to bless God, and I am sure you are blessing Him too, in *every view* but *that* which affects your feelings. I well realize the vagrancy of restless imagination, the chaos of the worn-out power of thought, the physical exhaustion, and the motionless apprehension of the next moment in apparently endless succession. And what, dear ——, is the whole of life, but the same suspense? And if we did realize things, as we do at the last, it would be perhaps the same breathless suspense! and in other respects, it *ought to be* the *same* distinctness of the vision of invisibles, the same—"Lord! save us; we perish!"—the same bringing together the desperateness of our circumstances, and the triumphant certainty of our deliverance. She brings us, in short, where your musings have, under the Lord's leading brought you—"Here" you say—"we have to glean our comfort from her life; and Oh! what a cumulative evidence does that life afford!" Yes—you find you cannot easily recollect the vintage, the harvest-home, the dividing

of the spoil at any death-bed, that is not inferior to that gleaning.

Now "blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," and may He support and console you with the riches of his grace and blessings, to the glory of His adorable name! Well! perhaps before you receive this, the two friends—your mother and my wife—are reposing on the Saviour's bosom, and as yet too much occupied with that love ever to have discovered each other, or to have indulged the sentiment of mutual Christian affection.

Divide my love among you: I must even be technical to express my wishes—an *undivided moiety* to each. Oh! may this scene and event be sanctified to each and all, in time and eternity!

Your affectionate,
J. T. N

LETTER XXI.

Feb. 20, 1846.

MY DEAR —,

Something I purpose to write to you, before I lay my pen aside. May the Lord furnish me with something to his praise, and to our profit! I just now had Miss Plumptre's letters in my hand, and found her remarking,—that whatever our minds are engaged upon, we can neither derive comfort from it, or mutual edification by it, except so far as the Lord is pleased to interpose, and by his Spirit impart a peculiar unction, which quickens the powers of the mind, and creates a sense of interest in the heart. Not a blade

even of the green pasture of Scripture will yield us food, or its softness inspire repose “beside the still waters,” unless “he give sleep to his beloved.”

On Wednesday, I usually speak for about twenty minutes, (though I do not stint myself, if I find I am supplied with any thoughts that may be useful), after the morning prayers, on a Psalm or portion of a Psalm. To-day I took Ps. lvii. 5. “Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens, and let thy glory be above all the earth”—and I was led to some thoughts of this kind. The prayer here uttered by David, is one of those, which, when offered with the whole heart, essentially distinguishes between the believer and the unbeliever. The believer heartily entreats “that God may in all things be glorified,” and exalted, because he desires it above all things, and because he is sensible, that by this alone can he be made happy. Never can he be restored to that happiness, which Adam enjoyed in Paradise, till he is first restored to the state of Adam’s mind, when he was first placed there, fresh from the hands of his Creator, who had formed him in his own image, every thought of his mind perfectly conformed to his will. “Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens, and let thy glory be above all the earth”—would have expressed in one sentence, every thing that Adam could have desired for that whole period of his existence. The believer, though a fallen creature, has the same desires. For he desires the glory of God above all things; and he knows that, though there is in him a “carnal mind, which is enmity against God;” yet that he can approach to happiness only in proportion as this “carnal mind” is subdued. He actually experiences, that every indulged desire, plan, or habitual thought, that we are conscious has not the approbation of our heavenly

Father, must tend to our unhappiness. We know in fact, that if he should give up his own will to ours, and assist us in the accomplishment of our own wishes, he would be consenting to, and ensuring our ruin. How happy then is the believer, who knows that God is ordering everything for his good ! For he can pray with all his heart—" Be thou exalted, &c."—and when in any distributive particular, his wishes or prayers contradict this general desire, he knows that his Father will not listen to them, unless he should have provoked him, and made it necessary that he should in some instances, and for a time, be suffered to follow his own imaginations, that " his backslidings may correct him." But on the other hand, in those petitions of the believer, which are for the Lord's glory, how greatly will he exceed all that he can ask or think ! And greatly will the believer find his happiness increased by such answer, beyond what he had expected, when he framed the petition. And miserable are the unbeliever's prayers, who is deriving self-indulgence and self-promotion, but not thinking on, much less deserving, that God might be exalted. His prayers cannot be answered, unless God answer them in anger, and punish his sin by giving him over to its power.

How should this, dear ——, reconcile us to all delays, and even denials, and what you call disappointments ! And how, delighted should we feel, that the Lord keeps all in his own hands, and that " the thoughts of his heart " remain " from generation to generation !"

Your affectionate,

J. T. N.

LETTER XXII.

Ipswich, March 25, 1846.

If by “the good hand of my God upon me,” I am brought to you in peace and safety, may He enable me to do good, and get good! May He make our communication sweet, and mutually profitable—I do long so to have the obstacles removed, which prevent me from “serving the Lord in godly quietness;” and great indeed will be his mercy, if He should bless the period of my repose with you, to dispose of any of those perplexing questions, which have for years kept me in almost constant agitation, and to set my feet habitually in the path of peace, and of improved and peaceful and growing communion with Him.

I find great advantage from command of time. But from want of domestic society, the mind becomes too worn to be able to seize the advantage, when it presents itself. In the alternation of Christian conversation and solitude, the mind finds intervals of refreshment and repose, which prepare it for improving opportunities of expanding itself in heavenly communion, and in meditation, as collecting materials for it.

Affectionate remembrances—and pray do not forget to convey them to dear ——. It would have been a high gratification to me to have written to her on her change of condition. But to be able to keep up those communications, requires much more combination of activity and leisure than I can secure. May the Lord of his infinite mercy shower his choicest blessings on herself and her partner!

Your affectionate,
J. T. N.

LETTER XXIII.

Ipswich, June 4, 1846.

Well dear ——, dear Mamma, dear ——, dear children, how is it with all and each of you? I am not only willing but desirous so far to be blamed, as that you should wonder, why this enquiry has not reached your eyes and ears before. But I must beg you not very decidedly to admit the impression, that it has been my fault. Certainly I may say ‘my will had not consented to it.’ I moved slowly to Bocking in the ponderous coach, in which —— saw me “quietly inurned,” and which in due time “op’d it’s ponderous, though not marble jaws, to cast me out again.” On the way I was often in that sort of imaginary conversation with you, which so crowds on the mind in reference to dear friends, from whom one has recently parted. I thought I should be able to utter some little of the impression, which a month’s experience of your kindness, and watchful anticipating care and tenderness has made upon my mind; and (while the faculty of memory remains unimpaired) I trust, embodied with my consciousness as long as I live. But alas! how vain (except to persons of more than average activity, and elasticity, and restorative provisions of mind and body) are many of these intentions, though at the time there seems nothing of distinct probability to prevent their execution! I find that all I can expect from an excursion from home, under the most favourable circumstances, is a temporary change of the habits of the mind, and some dispersion of the constitutional weight on my spirits by that means. When I return, the effect of much time unavoidably

spent alone again overweighs me. Yet there is one blessed thing, that when I am relaxing with Christian friends—servants and children of God—I feel the world is shut out, and that, if I do but seek the Lord, then with his society and theirs, I have the best relaxation and refreshment I can hope for on this side Jordan. Again, when I return home, I have the renewal of my privilege of intercourse with my flock, the sick and the well, for the loss of which no other indulgence can long indemnify me. This alternation, prudently managed, in dependence on the Lord, and with a thankful heart, would perhaps effect a good deal even for such a poor, restless creature as myself. The company of distant friends would be always something in prospect when wearied and worn; and when a little refreshed, the field of exertion and engagement would again attract. As I am now able to proceed on slowly, I cannot fix any precise day, when I may hope to be with you. Meantime, I shall be looking forward; and may our gracious Lord sanctify the indulgence of seeing you again, while I contemplate it in prospect, as a motive to activity in my employments in the meantime, and to the vigorous pursuit and improvement of those frames of mind, by which we may edify one another when we meet! “The Lord of peace himself give you peace always, by all means!”* May he fill your hearts, your habitation, and the Christian society with whom you at any time hold communion, with “that peace which passeth all understanding.” But my head is empty, and I had better close, with my love to you all, and affectionate remembrances to all, who shewed me so much kindness as your friend and guest. To the Lord “I commend you, who is able to build you up, and give you an inheritance among

* 2 Thes. iii. 16.

them that are sanctified, through faith that is in him."*
 Let me hear from and about you. How goes on dear
 ——'s Greek alphabet? Kiss the little ones for me.

Your affectionate

J. T. N.

LETTER XXIV.

Ipswich, July 21, 1846.

To-day, my dear —— after vainly purposing for the last ten, I had hoped to have written to you; and lo! I get a letter from you, and an opportunity of thanking you for your *zeal*, and my gracious God for your *success* in your exertions for me.

The substance of my communication would have been to state that dear ——'s illness necessarily involves the adjournment of my visit to you *sine die*. I mean not that sort of adjournment, by which a measure is lost in parliament. For I assure you, I have too keen a remembrance of the comforts of last May, to delay returning any longer than calls, even more imperative than your kindness and my enjoyment of it, enforce. But I am from such a call unable to assign any distinct day for undertaking to be in motion towards your part of the world. —— leans on me, as far as one human being ought on another; regards me as his spiritual father, and, from some peculiar correspondence in points of our experience, finds a satisfaction in me as a Minister and Christian friend, which he would hardly in any other. This joined to

* Acts xx. 32.

experience of benefit, I trust, to my own soul, and gathering materials for ministerial use, make me feel both in head and heart, fully occupied and interested ; and that this is the locality and employment assigned me by the Head of the Church, till he is restored to decided convalescence, or is "for ever with the Lord." And so, though you might justly punish me for not promptly responding to your kind call, I will believe you more indulgent, and shall please myself with the hope of eating my cake, and having it too ; of enjoying the company of the Lord and his servants in Suffolk, and looking to the same enjoyment at —— with you, whenever he shall in his providence appoint.

Your affectionate,

J. T. N.

LETTER XXV.

Oct. 9, 1846.

I have but little time, and less head, for a letter : but agreeably to the maxim of my later years, I shall send what I have, rather than procrastinate.

I was carried down to B—, with a flood-tide, feeling almost nothing of the usual tedium of sitting in a carriage. I think of the happy spot, and the happy group which I have left. May "the Father of mercies, and God of all consolation," pour his richest and most fostering blessings upon each and all of you ! Tomorrow I shall think more of you, because dear —— will be added to the party, and he will have what he is privileged to experience weekly, instead of twice or

thrice a year, the gratifying transition from school to home.

I shall think more of you still on Sunday, and accompany you up the hill to church and back again. May that gracious and covenant God, who is every where, and under all circumstances of separation, present with those who go and those who stay, pour upon you at ——, and His people at Ipswich, the riches of His grace, and prepare and preserve us for His everlasting kingdom!

Divide my love among you all, not severally, but in common, that each may have an undivided participation of the whole.

Your affectionate,
J. T. N.

LETTER XXVI.

ON FORMING A NEW PASTORAL CONNECTION.

Ipswich, Oct. 23, 1846.

MY DEAR ——,

I shall endeavour to get a few lines for you. I hope I may say, that my visit to you has ground for being blessed to effect two desirable ends. It has operated as a diversion in dispersing solitary musings, and replacing them with social feelings; and it has sent me home with more capacity for sitting down with tranquil composure by my own fireside, which may be considered as embracing most of what we look for, as the result of an excursion to the house of an old friend.

I would now look back, and with ardent aspirations

to the "Giver of every good and perfect gift," consider, what may be those blessings, which it is my heart's desire, and prayer to God, that He would impart or confirm to you, and yours, and so accomplish my earnest wish, that He may return your effective and affectionate kindness to me sevenfold into your own bosoms. You are beginning, with alternate hopes and fears, and prayers, intermixed, to form a judgment how your new pastor may satisfy the anxieties and cravings, and effectually supply the wants, of your souls. May the great Head of the church provide for you in this important matter at so eventful a crisis; and not only provide for you substantially, but let you, gradually, yet with satisfactory distinctness, know, and enable you to discern that He has done and is going on to do so! May He favour you with a believing superiority to talent, and tone, and manner, and familiarity, and every thing which is not essential in a preacher, and consequently in the same degree not essential *for* a hearer! And may He fix your most determined and sustained attention to what is delivered from the pulpit; that you may candidly and faithfully ascertain its true character. You must not only be prepared to acquiesce in the loss of those extraneous, however pleasing, accompaniments which I mentioned,—but you must listen with the recollection, that in "rightly dividing" the essential materials of Gospel truth, there are very many degrees; that those who have been gifted with the greatest excellence in this respect, very seldom receive it all at once. They have been waiting for it with much patient and persevering labour, and prayer, and through much varied experience, both individually and ministerially; and had you heard them years ago upon probation, when you had a voice, you might have chosen some other in preference. in

direct opposition to your eventual judgment. See then whether there be the gospel in its elements, and without any defect of the spirit of it, and whether there be (as has been intimated to you) that proof of its being at work in the heart of your new Minister and mistress—habitual and universal humility. And if you do find these, and are led to pray for them, and watch over them, and “consider them to provoke unto love and to good works,” I cannot but hope to hear, that the Lord hath spoken good concerning this new pastoral connection.

If — feels, after a little trial, inclined to go on with her Greek, I will endeavour, from time to time, to turn my thoughts to it, and send her a suggestion or two. As she has now no contractions to deal with, she will, I hope, find it no great difficulty to make herself completely familiar with the alphabetical characters, so as to read without hesitation or uncertainty. And may the original language, if she pursue it, open to her the riches of the spiritual treasury of the Divine word! I wish you many a good meal of McCheyne. I have seldom opened that book without feeling, in some degree, quickened or aroused for the time. The Lord grant that its excitement may be more effectual, abiding, and productive to you than mine has been! But as I am getting towards the end of my paper, I must not forget, that I have a god-child under your roof, about whom I feel, I assure you, not a little interest, and—I shall undisguisedly acknowledge it.—some degree of anxiety. He is just on the very edge of getting the mastery over papa and mamma. I witnessed two or three encounters, in which victory hung in doubtful scales; and as I see you are both watchful to prevent his getting a-head, I will just “stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance,” that you must

seize on the very present period. He is stronger, and more determined, and self-willed, than he was in May. Tell him, with my love, I expect to be told if he shrieks, and have just entreated the Lord, that I may hear he does not. More love than I can express be with you all. Each and all I beseech you pray for this poor grey-headed sinner. Affectionate remembrances to all enquiring friends.

A few lines as soon as you can.

Yours, in the best bonds,

J. T. N.

LETTER XXVII.

A FAREWELL TO HIS FRIEND'S HOUSEHOLD.

Nov. 18, 1846.

“Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ,” through the abounding communion of the blessed Spirit, be with you and your dear inmates at ——!

Since I saw you, I have had so little time at my disposal, that, considering also my languid appetite for rest, and especially rest from the exercise of thought, I scarce could improve a few minutes to any determinate purpose, or indeed to any, but the craving of the head for unlaboured materials of amusement—the Missionary or Jewish periodicals, the Record, or the review of some book connected with theology, or the Ministry. I looked repeatedly at the little Italian version of the message of Divine love, and had my hand also upon the instructing Missionary

communication. But—‘I cannot do it now’—was the only result.

But how great things has the Lord done for you, and hath had mercy upon you! May he unite you all in the closest bonds of that mutual love, which flows from “the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Spirit;” and continuously, and effectually, and directly, build you all up in his faith, fear, and love, that you may be “preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ!” May he keep each of you close to himself, “walking,” at once, “in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost.”

“Poor” R—* “but she is rich.” She is, I trust, espoused to another husband, even the bridegroom of the Church; and he is adorning her with the graces of His Spirit, and making her ready for himself in that world, where “they marry not, nor are given in marriage,” after the fashion of this world. I wish her much of his presence, (tell her,) and shall be glad to hear, that he has taken her to himself. Then she “shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more.” To the Lord God of body, and soul, and spirit, who gave Jesus to sanctify every power and faculty of each, do I now, through the intercession of that precious and all-prevailing advocate, commend the budding powers of intellect, and unfolding affections of the heart of my dear god-child. A sponsorial blessing for him, such as words cannot express! Most affectionate, Christian greetings to dear mamma, E. H. and C. Tell your domestics, at family worship, with grateful remembrance of their unwearied attentions to me, that I cannot omit, though without the smallest assumption of spiritual “dominion over their faith,” yet with

* A poor woman whom he had lately visited.

affectionate solemnity, to remind them to “give all diligence to make their calling and election sure,”—to remember the religious privileges they have under your roof, and how much more the Lord, and the Church, and the criticizing world, will expect from them than from many other servants.

Do not forget to pray, and to enquire for a Curate for me. That I have now, in addition to my two sermons on the Sabbath, and one in the week, to read prayers twice on the Sunday, and once in the week, is but a slender exposition of the length and breadth and depth of my inconvenience. My sick, my schools, my cottage lectures, are lying fallow.

Yours affectionately,

J. T. N.

THE next series comprises a correspondence with a young friend, whose opening mind and spiritual sensibilities greatly endeared him to Mr. N's heart. In many anxious perplexities the counsel of his experienced friend was greatly blessed, in imbuing his character with the valuable influence of Christian discipline, and establishing his confidence, amid much painful exercise, upon a deep and solid foundation.* He survived the insidious attacks of consumption, only to give in the sacred office the testimony of a dying man, to the reality and preciousness of the Gospel. It was Mr. N's affecting privilege to commit his friend's remains to the grave, and to preach a funeral sermon for the edification of survivors, a few months previous to his own translation.

* See pp. 275, 276.

LETTERS.

LETTER I.

Nov. 20, 1843.

MY DEAR —,

Thank you heartily for giving me a few lines. I seem to have very little time either for work, or for relaxation. It should seem, that in caring for my own and others' souls, in preparing for the pulpit, and writing, and conversing, I might occupy my whole time agreeably. But there seems much of labour and difficulty. How happy shall I be, if I may be favoured to drop a word, that shall be in any degree, acceptable and profitable to you! I suppose neither you nor I want anything, but to employ our minds in surveying the boundless riches which are given us in Christ.

Job says—"I have esteemed the words of thy mouth, more than my necessary food."* If I understand your account of yourself, you feel weary, weak, empty. How often am I drooping in this respect! Well; let us look a little into some of the probable causes, out

* Chap. xxiii. 12.

of which this arises. The Lord has brought us on part of our journey with many indulgences ; and we have made our calculation, that this should be always the case. “To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant.”* And when we find it otherwise, we are disappointed. We had so entirely reckoned upon these pleasing scenes and feelings, through which we have passed, making the strata and materials of future life, with all the additional advantage of more knowledge and experience, that we have difficulty in sustaining our satisfaction and self-possession, when we find it otherwise.

But the gracious and Almighty friend, who expired in anguish to deliver us from hopeless ruin, sees it to be necessary, in order to put us in possession of “the promise of this life,” as well as the next, that we should live and “walk by faith, and not by sight,” and sense ; that we should habitually be able to lean upon, and grasp, something more tangible and durable, than the mere success of earthly pursuits, and the participation of earthly comforts. Had we too much of them, we should learn to think we could do without him. And as he knows we cannot, he will not suffer us to fall into that mistake. They are to us at best what he makes them to be ; and they are then what they are, because they combine him, his all-sufficiency, his promise, and his effectual energy. And by themselves without him, they are, as to any subservience to produce comfort, accidents without a substance. Dear ——, you believe that he loves you, and is causing all to “work together for your good.” You believe it now, just as much as in your most pleasant seasons. Tell him so ; tell him again and again, till

* Isaiah lvi. 12.

your mind is habitually familiar with the experimental consciousness of that which you truly believe ; till you are better satisfied to leave every thing under his regulation, than you could be with the satisfaction of every desire of your own. But entreat him to make his way, and its conduciveness to your good, habitually and increasingly clear to faith, though it be not so to sight ; and that he would combine the progress of his plans in a manner that shall honour him, edify you, and benefit your ministry, in all the future course of your life.

I agree with you, that a faint and unstable state of mind requires thorough examination, and that distrust and unbelief ought to be deplored before God as the greatest of all sin. But then let not this be done with the spirit of distance and terror, which inevitably increases the evil. Our gracious Saviour is looking, watching, waiting to heal your wounds, to set every saving truth respecting himself in its true convincing light, by which the mind may be satisfied, that he is doing every thing to secure our present and future happiness. Read Scripture with prayer ; and you cannot fail to see that pardon, acceptance, a blessing on every thing in the present life, and unmixed, unending happiness in the next, are yours, if you receive the word which God has given of his Son.

I beseech you habitually to feed on the precious promises, in which these blessings are embodied ; and however reluctant you may be, to pour out your whole heart before God, tell him of all your misery and sin, and especially as that prayer exactly suits you, and the Lord answered it in the case of one who offered it before—let your incessant application be—“ Lord,

I believe; help thou mine unbelief!"* The direct application of faith to the Saviour is that, which not only presents the principle, but induces the habitual consciousness of alleviation, by establishing communion with infinite sufficiency and infinite compassion.

Most affectionately yours,

J. T. N.

LETTER II.

Ipswich, Sept. 7, 1844.

Now, dear —, I know not why I cannot get a hurried word with you by letter, since I know not how to get more. Well, you are looking for ordination in the spring. Your starting in —, must be as the Lord sees fit. He will shape the particular path for every one of us; we must use the means. But let us be sure, while we are doing so, that this does not absorb our whole or principal attention. To be kneeling, lying at the throne of grace, examining our hearts from day to-day, and amid the swarming infirmities and corruptions of them, to be just able to say — "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee;" my desire is to spend, and be spent for thee; to be here, or there, to be this or that, to be thus or otherwise, so that I may benefit one soul — this will put a life and confidence into all that we do in the way of furniture and preparation, that nothing else can give without it.

To draw nearer and nearer to absolute acquiescence

* Mark ix. 24.

in the Lord's will, while most strenuous and diligent in preparation ; and to be frequent, yea daily, in the habit of making this express surrender of yourself, your work and life, into the Lord's hands, will prepare for a determination, composure, and enterprize in the ministry, if your life be spared, and for " an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ," whenever he shall by death, or by his appearing, take us to himself. With me, all is habitually in confusion, because I do not live habitually near to God, and realize his presence and his love at all times—I do not mean only at times of actual communion in private—but at all times, and places. How delightful is it, when writing, conversing, teaching, to feel that we are looking to the Lord, conscious that we do desire to do his will in all, and with some comfortable persuasion, that he approves and suggests, accepts and will bless both us and those with whom we are communicating ! If I love myself, if I love my friends, if I would wish for the little enjoyments which this brief life affords, my prayer should be—" Lord, draw me nearer and nearer to thee." There is the source, and substance, and pattern of all love, and happiness, and power to do good. And while I deprecate above most things the refinement of abstraction, or the doctrine of universals, or platonic absorption, the Scripture warrants me in supposing that the love of God is the only effective practical principle, and that all endeavours at the distributive pursuits of Christian life without this, make the " valley full of ditches ;" and this source must supply the streams which are to fill them, and create and keep up the effect. This I desire and long and mourn after ; and it is better to mourn after it, and live in the improvement of the little that is given

us in answer to prayer, (and we should have ten and ten times as much, if we would open our mouths wider, and pray with more faith,) than to succeed in any mere material circumstantial advantage whatever.

Adieu. I am much as usual; when I am looking at my gracious Lord, all is well; it cannot be better. When I turn myself ever so little from him, I want this and that, and should go on to want more and more without end, if he did not bring me back to himself.

Your affectionate,

J. T. N.

LETTER III.

Ipswich, July 25, 1845.

Well, dear —, if we cannot speak mouth to mouth, let us endeavour to converse on paper. I grieve to hear your health is not improved. But there is something better than health, which we desire to secure, while the scales of constitutional comfort are in continual fluctuation; and which will, by its tranquillizing influence, both favour the alleviation of sickness and return of health, and ultimately abundantly more than overpay all we have lost in any other way.

But let me ask, in what way “sensibly,” and in what meaning of the expression, does the Lord “hide his face” from you? I find in my own case, that I suffer the impression, ‘that the Lord is hiding his face from me,’ to take possession of my feelings, when, upon an examination of the case, on Scriptural statements

and principles, I have no room to conclude, that the effect is any thing more than a general reduction of animal spirits, which renders me less susceptible than usual of cheerful impressions, from spiritual sources as well as others. But this is not God's hiding his face from us. "God hath shined in our hearts," when first he brought us nigh to himself, "to give the light of the knowledge of his glory," and our happiness, "in the face of Jesus Christ." * And he gave us faith, a spiritual eye, to see and receive this light. And I am persuaded you do not think, that he put out this eye of the soul. And therefore, by that you may always see your reconciled God, your Father, your Friend, incessantly employed—yes, every moment, and with infallible success, to make every inward feeling, and every outward event, concur to promote your best happiness. The mistake is—we suffer bodily discomfort to disguise the blessed light of his countenance, which shines forth continually in the face of Christ, and to make our spiritual optics languid and indolent in watching, apprehending, and conveying it to the heart and conscience. Is it not true, that we may as well deny the fact of the sun's shining at noon day, as the full favour of God to us, the unalterable favour he bears to us in Christ? But even the meridian sun may be an unavailing blessing, if the eyes are closed, or the window shutters shut, or the attention directed another way. Do, my dear —, make this out to yourself, as an undeniable truth, on Scripture principles. I have, I hope, been driven to see, that if I will give myself to be influenced by any thing, my comfort is always at the mercy of my fluctuating feelings. Even what I call my faith and joy, are very imper-

* 2 Cor. iv. 6.

fectly so. They are much more of the nature of feeling, and when my feelings are gone, my faith seems gone with them. I have found great help, by the Lord's blessing, on Romaine's Walk and Triumph of Faith—I mean really reasoned out and prayed over.

But, as I have said, this interruption to spiritual comfort, arises from bodily causes; so I ought to say, that the bearing of diet and management upon spiritual things, is a vastly more valuable result, than its influence upon the body. When I eat very deliberately indeed, the power of dwelling on Divine things, till they exert their exhilarating and attractive influence, increases continually, though slowly. And along with this bodily tranquillity, mental composure, indifference to present things, and the power of leaving all in the Lord's hands, are all increasing.

Let me have frequent communications, that I may endeavour to sympathize with your varying feelings, and suit, under the Lord's blessing, my replies to them. Love at home,

Most affectionately yours,

J. T. N.

LETTER IV.

Aug. 9, 1845.

MY DEAR ———,

In the delicate state of your health, you will forgive me for a little more than usual wish for frequent intelligence, especially as you are under a new treatment. Not that I allow my expectations of benefit to go beyond an obedient and believing use of means.

But your last was of a nature so to encourage expectation, that I have been looking rather anxiously for just the next link in the chain of information. When you can, give me a line.

Oh! how merciful and how loving, as coming from our heavenly Father, is the thought, that all our "steps are ordered by him, all our times are in his hands;"* and that every one of our successive and ever varying and trying events and feelings, are all issued out under his commission, to do us, and all for whom that precious intercession is offered up, *nothing but good!* Fallen in Adam from happiness, for which we were created, the Lord is taking various methods, (and the most distasteful are usually the most effectual,) to restore us—first, to a capacity for happiness, by mortifying all that belongs to the fallen nature, and to the corrupt atmosphere of the world, which is congenial with it; and then to bring us to the actual experience of the greatest happiness we can have on earth—communion with himself: delivering us from dependence upon, and expectation from any earthly plan whatever. How blessed a state it is! I am willing to hope, that by his blessing upon much painful mental experience, and much of what we call disappointment, my gracious heavenly Father has not altogether left me without an approach, however small, towards that frame, in which one is emancipated from the good as well as the evil of this world; not looking forward into a futurity of time for remedying the deficiencies of time past; nor thinking it any very great privilege to be enabled to make a little more progress in the Divine life on earth, (though, if we must abide here, it is an inestimable privilege;) but rather to

* Ps. xxxvii. 23; xxxi. 15.

have done with all this fluctuation between more and less, and “to depart and be with Christ, which is far better:” at least to be always looking, waiting, longing for that, as the only consummation devoutly to be wished for, and which frame certainly has “the promise of this life, as well as that which is to come”

My most affectionate remembrance to your dear parents, and all the family who are with you.

Your affectionate

J. T. N.

LETTER V.

Ipswich, Aug. 19, 1845.

MY DEAR ———,

To-day I have had a prayer-meeting to beseech the Lord for fair weather for the harvest, and I am just expecting my school-teachers to tea, but hope to snatch a few minutes for a little conversation on paper.

Baxter’s idea of the expression of, “God being all in all,” is one, which I believe many divines have taken up. But I can no more understand, nor admit it, than you. It is founded on what is said. 1 Cor. xv. 28, of “the Son becoming subject to him, that puts all things under him, that God may be all in all.” They suppose that all the purposes of mediation have been accomplished, and that therefore the Mediator’s office is done away. And with that must be done away the manifestative glory of it, and the beholding that glory by his saints, with other countless consequences, which would make it necessary for me to have a new revelation; for it appears to me to con-

tradict both the spirit and letter of that which God has already given us, in passages almost without number.

But it will be asked—how then can “the Son be subject to him that put all things under him, and God be all in all?” It appears to me, that a very similar and obvious distinction will remove the difficulty. Mediation, and the mediatorial kingdom, are two perfectly distinct things. The mediation is a thing inseparable from the idea of a sinner’s ever looking to God as “a reconciled Father.” The mediatorial kingdom is the Headship given to the Mediator over the whole kingdom of providence, while time lasts—no longer; that in his hands and administration, every event of time, and action, and even thought of every created being—*all* of these combinedly might be subservient to accomplish the purposes of his mediation; that all might be arranged with reference to his birth, death, resurrection, ascension, the preaching of the Gospel, the gathering in of his elect, “the ruling of his enemies with a rod of iron,” and at last “dashing them in pieces like a potter’s vessel,”* till the whole is concluded, and all those enemies are under his feet. When this is done, the scene, the subjects and objects of this mediatorial kingdom, as subservient to the purposes of mediation, are done with, and the earth is no longer governed mediately through the Son of man. That department of the Divine dominion is gone; and God, who had been thrust out by the usurpation of sin and Satan over this world, having taken all his true subjects out of it to heaven, reigns over them as well as over the other pure and happy intelligences,—“all in all.” There is no resistance to his dominion in them

* Psalm ii. 9.

more than in the angels; no need of a dispensation of grace, of an intermediate kind of government; but they are by Jesus brought perfectly to willing, delightful acknowledgment and acceptance of God's kingdom—and are fitted with faculties to be eternally his willing, capable, loving subjects. But the mediation, the Mediator, the medium can never cease. In heaven for ever is “the Lamb as it had been slain,” and he is “the light of heaven,” * without which the saints could never see, or enjoy, or even apprehend God. And that God could not be seen but *mediately*, seems evident, I think, from the expression used in the passage I have alluded to. It is said, “the Lord God doth lighten it,” he is the cause, and “the Lamb is the light thereof,” † by means of which the Lord God lightens that heavenly world: the medium or atmosphere, through which “he who dwelleth in the light that is unapproachable,” ‡ adapts, reveals, and manifests himself to angels and the spirits of the just made perfect.

However, I have no doubt, that Baxter in truth and in substance held all this, as much as you or I do; and that all the servants of God do the same, though they may differ from us and from each other in their mode of expressing themselves: confounding the exercise of mediation between God and his people, with the administration of his mediatorial government of the creation.

But let us turn a little from the attempt at a correct interpretation to the realizing anticipation of the thing spoken of.

“Ye know not the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh?” § First—our Lord *warns*. He

* Rev. v. 6.

† 1 Tim. vi. 16.

‡ Ib. xxi. 23.

§ Matt. xxv. 13.

represents the inexpressible importance of being continually in expectation of his coming, under the comparison of that event with the incessant watching of a man, who expects that his house may be broken into and himself plundered and murdered. Then, having presented the undeniable necessity of it—he cheers the hearing ear and the willing mind with the joy and exultation which should be the portion of the man who *does* watch. He has roused himself at the Lord's warning, and then finds he has not merely, like a sentinel, to struggle against sleep by abstracted resolution, and attention; but that he has a continual employment and interest to keep off that slumber, which is continually creeping upon an empty unexcited mind. It is his Lord's servant, and there is not one amongst them, to whom he has not given something, with which he may benefit his fellow-servants. This is to be cultivated and improved, and continually expended and employed for their benefit, and how blessed is the thought, that, while we are saying—'How short the time is! How little can I do of all this in the way of improving my talent, or of applying it for the good of those whom it is my soul's desire to benefit!' the improvement and application need not be separated in contemplation or in effort. Attend to the application, and have a word ready for every one, such as you would wish the last you utter should be; and then will your gifts be increasing day by day, and you will at last render to your Lord his own with usury.

Live, dear —— about the door of Heaven, watching when it will open, and our gracious, loving Lord shall appear; and then you will never be without a

* Matt. xxiv. 42—44.

seasonable word, and the utterance of it under that prospect and its influence will make every sentiment you communicate twice as precious to your own soul, twice as valuable for future communications. Thus you will not want to search the thoughts and comments of others, but the mere expenditure, the free giving of what you have freely received, will be putting it out to the best interest, and the most accumulation and increase to your capital

..... Take study very composedly, not to be anxiously "careful" about it. "All God's children shall be taught of him, and then great shall be their peace." * And if he teach you, you will be growing in ability to teach others.

'Amidst all my trials, unbelief (say you) is the sorest.' Yes, and the fruitful parent of all the rest. One is so shocked at one's own absurdity in questioning that, for which we have better evidence than for nine-tenths of what we believe without having actually seen it: and the ingratitude, and affronting imputation of unbelief on the Divine goodness and truth: that we seem to shrink still further from venturing to lay hold on truths, which our polluted hands and hearts seem unfit to touch. Nevertheless, look on what our infinitely gracious God has done and is doing for us; and we shall be "persuaded that nothing can separate us from his love" †—that during our seasons of unbelief, "he abideth faithful," and we cannot lose the kingdom, except we judge that Christ's worthiness is not sufficient for our title, and we put away that title from us.

But I hope, dear ——, the Lord is bringing us by these conflicts with unbelief, and our other corruptions

* Isa. liv. 13.

† Rom. viii. 38, 39. 2 Tim. ii. 13.

to that frame in which he delights. "The Lord's delight is in them that fear him, and put their trust in his mercy. To this man will I look, and with him will I dwell."* The Lord grant us this fear of him, in which is "strong confidence!" †

But I must conclude. In haste,

Yours affectionately,

J. T. N.

LETTER VI.

Aug. 28, 1845.

MY DEAR ———,

I do not think I have yet thanked you for the translation of Monod's sermon: and, as I know you will not suspect me of flattery, nor I trust be over-elated by the commendation of so poor a creature, I may tell you that I was very much pleased and interested with the introduction.

But I want, after all, to see Monod in the background, or on one side, that I may look straight towards him, who is the object of the desires of us all *three*. I can find that I read Monod, and the best that has been written on the same subject, and am continually liable to one or other of two kinds of abuse about it. Either my heart is so utterly cold, and hard, that I can take no more interest in it than if I were reading a romance; or else my feeling is all called out by the talent of the writer, and his skill in the management and disposition of his subject.

* Ps. cxlvii. 11. Is. lxvi. 2.

† Prov. xiv. 26.

How utterly vile is this! As if one were to go into a room, and meet the dearest friend and benefactor there, and instead of looking at him, and conversing with him, were to bestow all one's attention upon his picture in the room, by some exquisite artist.

And we mistake even the love we have for each other, if we think to improve it in this way. To look directly at one another is not the way to grow in mutual love; but to look at each other through him, or as the image of each other is reflected from him. His beauty upon us should be our mutual comeliness; the price he paid for us, our value in each other's eyes;—the communion with him, and communications from him, the attraction to mutual communion. He is the way to God, and he should be the way to every thing; and then we should never come or go without profit. It is want of constant intercourse with him, that nourishes unbelief, and a cold, legal, distrustful spirit. Whether you mourn or rejoice, whether you are tasting of his blessedness, or the bitterness of some fruits of your evil nature, (which you must do, and probably pungently too, every day) carry it to him, pour it into his ear, into his heart, for both are always open to his poor returning prodigals; and, whatever else is interrupted, let faith realize even what feeling contradicts, and plead his own engagements, when to sense they seem impossible. Argue with him on the pretences of unbelief, and fill his ears with your reflexions on the misery or the ingratitude of your sinful neglect of him. You are aware you cannot avoid feeling both. But you keep them to yourself, instead of telling them to him. The same with coldness, and insensibility,—dead calms. We lie down, instead of crying mightily to the Lord. Did we take the opposite course, of telling him every thing, every thing, however

distressing in other respects, would increase the best of all things, *our familiarity with him*. And he would be to us what David intreats him to be—"Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort."* Strong as a fortress, furnished and provisioned as a habitation, and access to it at all times.

Love to all around you,
Affectionately yours,
J. T. N.

LETTER VII.

Ipswich, Oct. 11, 1845.

My DEAR ——,

Wherever you are, I trust the Lord is with you, and that, however the animal frame and spirits are, faith beholds "the Sun of Righteousness with healing in his beams." What a light of contrasted wonders does the salvation of the Gospel present! A case of absolute ruin; in itself utterly hopeless! a Physician of infallible skill, who never failed in the instance of a single patient! He has taken us, I trust, under his care: and he has said—"Ye are borne by me from the belly; ye are carried from the womb; and even to old age I am he, and even to hoar hairs will I carry you. I have made, and I will bear you, I will carry and will deliver you." † Here is a provision made for sustaining hope and confidence unto the end. This assurance calls forth David's prayer, which I have always thought very comprehensive and consoling—"Keep my soul,

* Psalm lxxi. 3.

† Isaiah xlvi. 3, 4.

and deliver me !” * This is all I want for security, for time and for eternity. “*Keep me*” all the journey through, and *then* “*deliver me*” out of the hands of my enemies, who, after having assaulted me all my life, will especially watch for me at the close. But he, who “through death” has taken out the sting of death, and “overcome him that had the power of death, that is—the devil, has also delivered them from the fear of death, who previously were all their life time subject to bondage.” † And of this incessant and persevering keeping and preservation every step of the way, is a type, a pledge, and a preparation. Every step we are “kept and delivered.” There is always some actual assault, or some yet more dangerous ambush, during which we must be “kept,” and out of which we must be “delivered.”

These are, every one of them, a pledge to assure us of the faithfulness of our God in Christ ; and each individually, and all in combination, are a preparation for the last step, and appointed beforehand, and guided by the Divine hand to secure our taking that last step in safety, and making it to land us on the threshold of heaven.

And what a value and importance does this stamp on each of these precious steps, and the frame of mind, in which we proceed through them, one after another ! We may be going on with a general steady pace, and in a frame, which from the solidity of our Scriptural grounds, held by a Scriptural and simple faith, needs admit no doubt of safety. Yet such a state may be susceptible of improvement both in its progress and its close. Increasing communion with God, and “marking, learning, and inwardly digesting his word.”

* Psalm xxv. 20.

+ Heb. ii. 14, 15.

by the way, may greatly, yea, indefinitely increase the full sail, “the abundant entrance* into that everlasting kingdom” and glory. All the *familiarity* that I have gained with these things has been greatly enlarged in the last twelve months; during which I have extended my habits of opening my thoughts on any subject of Scripture or experience, on paper. This I have found has led to my “marking, learning, and inwardly digesting” the materials of Scripture. Sometimes endeavouring to concentrate the understanding on the Scriptural truths; sometimes setting their persuading, moving, exciting, endearing, composing results before the affections.

Affectionately yours,
J. T. N.

LETTER VIII.

Ipswich, October 17, 1845.

MY DEAR _____,

May the Lord be with us to bless us both, while we are communing in spirit, and enable us to edify one another; that I may obtain some spiritual blessing, while thinking of you, and lifting up an ejaculation for you at intervals, as I write, and that what our gracious heavenly Father shall give me at this time may be acceptable, edifying, consoling, and supporting to you.

Communion with God, and walking under a sense of his presence, power, and grace, makes us “desirous to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.”

* 2 Peter i. 11. Gr.

And yet, inasmuch as, even here, “we walk by faith, and not by sight,” “leaning on our beloved,” while “coming up from the wilderness;” it makes us also willing to “wait all the days of our appointed time.” For we are assured of communion with him by the way; that we shall find “in the wilderness, waters break out, and streams in the deserts;” that he will cause it by his presence to “rejoice and blossom as the rose;” * and that we shall be enabled, through his supply and support, to manifest his grace to others, and induce them to unite in the song—“How great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty!” † You are still in your first love, and have, I trust, had little, comparatively with older travellers on the road, to interrupt those feelings of gratitude and devoted attachment to him, which were called forth, when he first manifested himself to your anxious and enquiring mind, as the Divine and All-sufficient Saviour of your soul. I have to tell of difficulties and dangers, of rebellions and backslidings, which, while they have wounded and weakened me, yet have notes of a peculiar kind to add to the song, when I remember how he has “healed those backslidings,” ‡ and “restored unto me the joy of his salvation,” and has, and does, I trust, “uphold me with his free spirit.” §

That he should so restore me, after sins, which in the intensity of their ingratitude, (though not in their material and formal features,) far exceed those of Peter, and in their rebellious murmuring and discontent, go beyond the repeated sullenness of Jonah, is out of the power of words to express. But what shall I say, when I consider that he has not only renewed the sense of his pardoning love to my soul personally,

* Isaiah xxxv. 5.

‡ Hosea xiv. 4.

† Zech. ix. 17.

§ Psalm li. 12.

but has given me acceptance with his people, and made me an instrument, and in some greater degree perhaps of late years, of awakening sinners and comforting believers, when I might have lain by, perplexed with overwhelming discouragement as to my own safety, and utterly useless in the work of the ministry ! How infinitely compassionate, how tenderly considerate, not only to restore, but to reinstate, and employ me again ! Oh ! there is not a single feature of his loving-kindness, but would supply materials for unlimited contemplation, if we did set our minds to lay hold and keep hold of them. But what do I say of *contemplation* ? These things ought always to be *talked over with and to* him. They should always be brought into the form of communion with him, and accompanied with the expression of the grateful feelings they excite. In this way they would be the means and materials of a continually growing holy familiarity with that “friend, that sticketh closer than a brother ;” and which would not be the less *familiar*, because it *is holy*—but would make it painful to be any considerable time, without some communication with him. I am satisfied, if one would believe the truth,—viz. that he is always desiring to hear from us, and to communicate with us, we should feel the desire that we do to the conversation of a dear friend, to indulge the feelings of satisfaction, or to console those of sorrow. Few know more of Peter’s feeling than myself—“Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord !” Yet on the result of attempt at communion with the Lord, I can say—‘Believe me, having tried it.’ You may get familiar with him, if you will.

Your affectionate

J. T. N.

LETTER IX.

Ipswich, October 23, 1845.

DEAR ———,

How delightful will it be to have done with the things that are seen and are temporal, to have this body of death and humiliation made like the Redeemer's glorious body, and effected too by his glorious Almighty power! Well; this is the very thing to reconcile us to all our present humiliations, and burdens, and crosses, and discipline. They all are in contemplation of this end: and each individually, and all conjointly, working together in subservience to it. O may we, while we long for the end, be improving every means which God has appointed, for its accomplishment: mortifying self, getting the world under our feet, making a joyful 'living sacrifice of ourselves, our souls, and bodies,'—to the Redeemer and his cause! Well; this begins with the desires of the heart, and these are kindled by the sense of his love: and this again from dwelling on the records of it in his word, and from the innumerable instances we have tasted of it in the course of our pilgrimage. He has been making all your beds in your sickness; and either giving you the "sleep of his beloved," or "songs in the night," instead of it. If he does this for the body, and for the soul, in its state of infant grace on earth, what will he do for us in heaven, when he comes, and receives us to himself, that we may be where he is?

Look at what he has done, is doing, and will do for you, and you will love him, and you will be drawn on in his service, and find it a service of love—not estimating by quantity of material result, but by the

delight of doing all you can, little or much, and delighting even in the blush of humiliation that you can do no more, and the regret that you can have no more of the delight of following the steps of his life, and bearing the cross for his sake and his glory.

When I began this, two days since, I purposed to have expressed myself rather fully on the absolute necessity of persevering deliberation in eating. Whatever may be a man's confidence and devotedness, his actual exercise of them will materially depend on his head being unimpeded by the fumes of the stomach. Comparatively, I seem never to have had the use of my bodily or mental faculties till now, and I now feel such advantage for meditation and prayer, that I would not willingly take a morsel or two beyond what will leave me at liberty for communion with God in prayer and praise. I am greatly below other Christians at best. But I perceive a difference like that between something and nothing, a ratio of infinity, according as diet is conscientiously managed.

Affectionately yours,

J. T. N.

LETTER X.

Ipswich, March 10, 1846.

I have been wishing, dear —, to write to you ever since your last letter but one reached me; and materials have been repeatedly before my mind for that purpose. But it is with great difficulty I get through a portion of what I ought to do daily; and that with so much sensation of discouragement, that

I am often on the point of saying—‘ This step must be the last.’ But I have nothing to do with sensation. I am as sure that I shall do all that I have to do, or rather that he “whom I have believed,” will, as he has done, “work all my works in me,” and perform his own good work even unto the end, as that I now hold this pen, and am employing it in writing to you.

I am indeed sensible of nothing of that animal confidence, which some persons call assurance, but rather, in opposition to all feeling, I believe that “he is faithful who hath promised,” and, that “he cannot deny himself.”* According as the day is fine or cloudy, I may be able or unable to receive any sensible satisfaction from the blessed truth, “that God is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”† But of course these sensible changes do not affect the faith in that truth in the case of any one, who has ever seriously believed it. And various are the causes, (most commonly physical), which greatly affect the actual exercise of faith, as connected with enjoyment and practical exertion in God’s service, in the case of most Christians.

This respects a part of the conflict between the flesh and spirit, which, while it is very little attended to, is the most important part of experimental divinity, to treat with soundness, skill, and effect; and is in practice that part of actual experience, under which believers, who manifest no small degree of patience, exertion, and perseverance, do yet very often so entirely yield, as to neutralize all their exertions, and compromise all their success.

A man has gone on awhile, it may be, in the

* Heb. x. 23. 2 Tim. ii. 13.

† Heb. xi. 6.

Lord's work, with average comfort and satisfaction, in prayer, or exhortation, or reading, hearing, or preaching the word. He enjoys the power of a clear mind, influenced by the disposing and teaching of the Holy Spirit. This process, presenting no obstruction to faith, is exercised without difficulty; and, walking by faith, he proceeds with comfort, steadiness, and success.

But soon, without any substantial change, there is a change in all circumstantial particulars. Health and strength are lowered; animal spirits flag; the constitutional untowardness affects the powers of thought, and the media and instruments of sensation; the nerves no longer convey sensations of comfort, nor the senses right impressions of objects to the brain, nor the brain right ideas of sensation or reflection to the mind. Hence, as all was before done with facility, comfort, and effect; all is now done with difficulty, often with pain, and with partial, and apparently often with total, defeat.

It requires the direct, resolute, and vigorous exertion of faith, to resist the action of such a principle of disease, and to counteract its effect. To believe in opposition to what our feelings and senses tell us to be fact, is no easy matter; and yet it seems to be inconsistent with the simplest and most elementary principles of scriptural truth, and faith's reception of it, to suppose that amidst all this apparent change there is any real change at all. The work of grace is going on in the soul of the individual, and in the whole number of the redeemed, under the great Head of the Church, in both periods with equal certainty and success. Indeed the intervals of debility are not unfrequently made subservient to the most loving designs

of our Almighty friend, and the most effective accomplishment of the objects of that love on our behalf.

It is indispensable therefore to go on believing, as well as with every other "work of God," (John vi. 29.), without any regard to circumstances. If we watch the weather, we shall neither plow, sow, nor attempt any work of cultivation.* If we act according to feelings, or trust according to feelings, we shall spend the far greater part of our time in complete inaction; or that languor which accomplishes nothing. But if we are looking, not at ourselves, but at Christ, we shall find that, "when we are weak, then we are strong," and that his "strength is made perfect in our weakness." †

And this is attained very materially by direct manual labour, applied to the very point of our difficulties, even though it is withdrawn for the time from the demands of the day. It may be, you are confused, perplexed, discouraged, and that both faith and walk are universally affected, and the understanding also. Well! instead of going on blundering, and suffering faith to decline more and more, get your mind into direct application to your condition. Employ your pen, instead of writing sermons, upon the points of experience and practice which distress you, and the actual particular truths and facts, which unbelief is at work upon. Get these clearly before you. See where the point of contradiction exists between faith and sense; and set out in a connected series of scripture quotations the different false assumptions, which unbelief would press on the mind. Contrast with them the opposite statements of Scripture, till you see that the falsehoods involve the denial of truths as

* Eccles. xi. 4.

† 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10.

obvious, as that two and two are four, and facts as undeniable, as that the sun shines at noonday. And if you find that plain truths respecting practical daily occupation have come at last, by continual conversing with them, to have a power over the mind which they never had before, then you may depend on it that Divine truths, contemplated by faith, and argued on scriptural principles and announcements, will have a corresponding effect.

This habit of exercising the mind, will not only bring it to clearness of contemplation and impression ; but it furnishes you with materials to pour out your heart before God, and shew him of your troubles, which ordinarily is very *slightly* and therefore *ineffectually* done. How much in the way of argument, expostulation, and correction of the defects and aberrations of spiritual vision and sensation, do we see of this kind in David's Psalms !

I am glad you have no time to read other books than Scripture. How interesting are all such family anecdotes as you allude to, connected with our spiritual history ; and how ought they to stimulate our care for our own souls, and those near and dear to us !

Kind love.

Your affectionate,
J. T. N.

LETTER XI.

May 15, 1846.

DEAR —,

I am suffering considerable constitutional derangement. But a word, such as the Lord enables me, I will attempt.

‘ I need, or *sensibly* need encouragement.’ Keep to that word ‘ *sensibly*.’ It is sense and feeling, which stand in the way of our faith.

I seem more and more compelled to live on this—“ The Lord has spoken ; and therefore what he has spoken must be true.” And it must be true, according to the full meaning of the terms of invitations and promises ; and these take in every case of backsliding and unfaithfulness. And this must be trusted to, as distinctly true to the full extent of the terms ; otherwise the encouragement thus given would be manifestly the most cruel deceit. And the most marked exceptions and disappointments would be those instances, which the promises were specially intended to heal and relieve.

I hardly know whether I can speak more to the point than by saying, that we must learn more and more to believe without reasoning, and without feeling : without wanting demonstration to support our reliance, or feeling to be its present evidence. Otherwise we are believing on the ground of something other than the real ground of believing, i. e. the word of God. We are not more convinced, when, or because we see the truth clearer ; nor is our conviction probably less when it is obscured. But rather we are pleased with having the materials of conviction before the mind to amuse it, and uncomfortable when we have them not : as a man takes more comfort in his property, when he can employ his mind in stating its present amount, and calculating its probable increase, than when his mind is confused, and he can do neither. But if my property depends on the promise of infinite power, and unfathomable resources, and unchanging truth and love ; then I have no occasion to reckon up what it is in amount, or to enumerate

the probability of its safety and increasing value—these are certain from those infinite perfections. And if, notwithstanding, we are exercised with disquieting apprehensions, these cause us to “work out our salvation with fear and trembling,” and to cast all our dependence on “God, who worketh in us both to will and to do.” And this is just what he designs we should do. To be able to say,—“*I will wait nevertheless,*”—is as much as at present we must ordinarily expect.

“The Lord of peace himself give you peace by all means.” *

Your affectionate,
J. T. N.

LETTER XII.

May 16, 1846.

MY DEAR —,

“Blessed are ye that hunger now” †—This is in fact what you seem to me to be labouring to express throughout. I hunger—I want something which I cannot get. There is a desire which I have received of the Lord, and which is so restless, notwithstanding all supplies that can be obtained here, that the more I feed, the more hungry I become.

We both feel, I suppose, the same habitual impression. We hunger after an interest in Christ, and after a lively, influential, practical sense of the value and delight of that interest. We would be dwelling upon

* 2 Thess. iii. 16.

† Luke vi. 21.

this, reckoning upon our heavenly treasure, anticipating our heavenly inheritance, at all times. We would avail ourselves continually of the promise of this life, as to the spiritual supplies promised in the wilderness, and which sometimes, when supplied in abundance, we find so refreshing, that “our mouth is filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing.”

This spiritual appetite is often exercised with delay, and disappointment of expectations, which have been highly excited; and the soul is brought low, and becomes faint and weary; “opens its mouth and pants, for the longing” * it has for the supplies of the Spirit—for the renewal of spiritual strength and vivacity, for the liveliness and distinctness of its organs and perceptions, and for the clear presentment and revelation of the Redeemer and his perfections.

But then this longing and fainting wearies the pilgrim of his wilderness-state, and journey, and endears Heaven. It prevents his being willing to settle on this side Jordan. Yet still the views and anticipations of Heaven get more defined to the eye of the mind, though the sense of them as to enjoyment is withheld. Thus we are detained in the posture, and strengthened in the earnestness of desire. This, if you observe, is the frame of all those characters, which our Lord enumerates as “*Beatitudes*,”—states of blessedness. They all imply a sense of deficiency, of incontrollable desire which cannot be satisfied on earth: and the blessedness of which consists in this, that they shall be satisfied hereafter.

And how really blessed is the effect of such a frame! For you and me for instance—to think how pleasant

* Psalm cxix, 131.

it would be to meet on earth ! And yet how unspeakably more blessed it would be, if the Lord should say to each of us now, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." * When, dear ——, shall we "awake up after his likeness?" Never till then can "we be satisfied with it;" † and surely we can never be satisfied with any thing else.

Your affectionate,
J. T. N.

LETTER XIII.

Ipswich, June 17, 1846.

MY DEAR ——,

Your letter has been so very congenial to my own mental experience. A very little bodily pain "drinks up my spirits." And even in the suspension of intellectual enjoyment, is not the Lord teaching us what the intellect was made for, and calling us off from unconcerning things, and even from the media of knowing himself, that we may, in his school of affliction, have our hearts fixed immediately on himself?

"Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, &c. but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord." ‡ Now this the Lord teaches us to do, just in the proportion in which he teaches us to say of every feeling and every event as it occurs—"It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good!" §

* Luke xxiii. 43;

‡ Jer. ix. 23, 24.

† Psalm xvii. 15.

§ 1 Sam. iii. 18.

I suppose you know that beautiful passage from Baxter, in the Memoir of Miss Graham—"In thee I expect my true felicity and content. To know thee, and love thee, and delight in thee, must be my blessedness, or I must have none. The little tastes of this sweetness which my thirsty soul hath had, do tell me that there is no other joy. I feel that thou hast made my mind to know thee, my heart to love thee, my tongue to praise thee, and all that I am and have to serve thee!" *

Has not the Lord always exercised his people's faith with waiting? And does not their earnest desire and impatience of delay prove, that the clearer view you wish is not necessary to create attraction?

I shall not be able to see you to-morrow.

Your affectionate,
J. T. N.

LETTER XIV.

Aug. 8, 1846.

MY DEAR _____,

I want to be able to write to you as often as I feel the inclination. And yet, when I am about to begin, I feel my own poverty and weakness, and as if what I have to say were hardly worth breaking silence for. But there is at least one reason for speaking. I can speak good of the Lord, on a day sadly wasted, as to all my disposal of it. I can see his hand repressing my improvident feebleness, and redeeming its wasteful

* Memoirs, pp. 332, 333. Conclusion.

effects. After looking at a text for a sermon in the morning, I talked it over a little to the young people, with a view to get myself interested about it. I then came home, and took McCheyne, to revive the physical faculties of the mind by a little relaxation, proposing to feel more fit for returning to the more direct contemplation of Divine things afterwards. There is after all nothing so sweet, as well as so good, as the close consideration of what concerns God and souls. I found in one page, though it spoke of nothing but what reproved and shamed me as a Minister, how delightful it was to be even so shamed, and to be drawn to a *little, little* prayer, that, though I could never hope to do what McCheyne did, I might be favoured with something more of his spirit. After dwelling a little on this, I went to see two of my sick, who are in the same family, and afford me no satisfaction, and with whom I am consequently usually myself dry and constrained ; yet the Lord gave me a *little* liberty.

I came home to tea, and again felt as if I must have more relaxation, but was again led, *before I thought of it*, to take up McCheyne, and without being able to get out of the reach of my harassing invaders, yet to find a table “prepared in their presence,” and the Lord’s power and grace more displayed than often in the most tranquil and uninterrupted seasons. And still he sustains me, though I do not feel tranquil even now. To his infinite goodness and tenderness I commend you and your dear mother, and am,

Your affectionate

J. T. N.

LETTER XV.

Ipswich, Aug. 25, 1846.

I learn with concern, dearest —, that you are not so well as even when you wrote to me. How rejoiced should I have been to have heard a favourable account! But “it is the Lord,” and “he doeth all things well,” and all in love; and therefore to his will I desire to be conformed in all things, both for you and for myself. He can neither mistake nor be unkind. If he take you to himself, you must be incomparably happier than you can be on earth. However contrary to the feelings of flesh and blood, yet all wisdom, and all happiness, and the most unbounded expression of human feeling too is included in that prayer of our Lord, which is just what I would now pray in respect to yourself—“Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass.” He knows how it would rejoice me to see you restored to health, and once more able to publish the Gospel message. But I dare not, as I love you, fail heartily to add—“Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.”* If our will be in any respect different from his, how deeply should we lament both for ourselves and our friends eventually, if it were complied with! How hard should I probably have wrestled to have my dear wife spared to me! But compare the alternative—We should have had eleven years of the bitter-sweet of human comfort; and she would have been deprived of as long a period of exemption from all sorrow, and rest in the bosom of Jesus. His determination must be kindest. The Lord direct you, dear —, and all

* Matt. xxvi. 39.

your friends, to a loving, obedient waiting to know his will, and to a happy meeting here, or in his heavenly kingdom !

Meantime may he strengthen your faith, if yet he see fit to suffer clouds to intervene ! And remember—he encourages even those who have “*no light*,” (and we can conceive no greater trial than that) “to trust in the Lord, and stay upon our God.” *

Give my love to all. The Lord Jesus be with your spirit, and may we often have communion in the Holy Ghost at the throne of grace !

Your affectionate
J. T. N.

LETTER XVI.

Ipswich, Sept. 3, 1846.

DEAREST ———,

How unspeakable is the privilege of being permitted to say to the same Being—“My Lord and my God,” and,

“Jesu, lover of my soul, let me to thy bosom fly.”

And to think that he is as truly a friend, a sympathizing friend, as any one of those, whom, throughout life, he has disposed to manifest themselves to us in that character.

But then he is as much beyond them all, as God is above man, both in zeal, affection, and ability. He just begins to shew his love in its true colours, when theirs must be at an end for ever. Oh ! that our readi-

* Is. l. 10.

ness in turning to them, emptying our hearts to them, giving them the delight of supplying our wants so far as they can, would effectually suggest to us, "in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, to make our requests known unto God;" and to get nearer and nearer to learn the sweet experience of having "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, to keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." *

Dear ——, how we undervalue him! We never wished yet, at any moment, for what he is willing to give at every moment. And yet he is as willing as ever. He sees the encumbering flesh weighing us down, and keeping the clogged brain from conceiving of our privileges, and especially of his love, in any thing compared to the light, in which it deserves to be contemplated, and estimated, and in which he is always ready to manifest it just as we are able to bear it. Sometimes we get a little glimpse; and that creates the desire for much more. Then comes an interval of spiritual weakness or bodily oppression, and we are unable to pursue the train of thoughts. But it is blessed to wait. "Blessed are they that wait for him." †

Your affectionate
J. T. N.

LETTER XVII.

Ipswich, Sept. 5, 1846.

DEAREST ——,

How gratifying to me this morning was the sight of your own hand writing! Sweet is this indulgence of

* Phil. iv. 6, 7.

† Is. xxx. 18.

our heavenly Father, that he should grant me this pleasure, and permit you under the present weakness of the earthly tabernacle to afford it me, and to have the conscious enjoyment of doing so. Oh! the compressive at once and expansive power of Divine grace and love! crowding into a sentence of communication which he is pleased to bless, a spark of his infinite tenderness, or support, or joy; and expanding this by means of a single sentence, so as to fill the hearts both of the reader and the writer, by a feather, and a few drops of black liquid upon a white surface—materials as much below the incalculable blessedness of the sensation imparted, as the clay and the spittle, in comparison with the mighty result of giving sight to the blind! Consider from such a single instance of the refreshment of a friend's letter, what must be the power of blessing residing in him, who creates and imparts the enjoyments; and, from the frequency of its occurrence, his delight in every fresh exertion of that power! We are in his hands, dear——, for time and for eternity. But I am far from what I should describe or conceive as "perfect peace," if by that is to be understood abiding *sensible* peace. Indeed if anything on earth can be attained beyond or otherwise than through the instrumentality of faith, it seems to me that we should at once be passing the limits of our present state, and almost of our finite nature. Perfect peace is such only, in proportion as we go out of ourselves, and by faith make all that belongs to Jesus ours. Now we can do this but imperfectly; and therefore the perfect peace must be the being conscious that I have that perfection of every thing in him, and that, being in him, it can never be changed or lost. But as *I*, a poor sinful worm, am the subject of this faith, it can never be perfect as to

experience and consciousness. Otherwise faith would be sight; earth heaven, mortal immortality. But we shall be correctly and exactly like him, when "we see him as he is." And meanwhile we are by faith, as the Lord is pleased to mature it, becoming more and more like him to the extent, to which faith is capable of continually beholding more and more of him in the glass of the Gospel.

I had put down a thought or two, on which I intended to enlarge. But I have no longer time to do it. To the love of the Father, and the Son, through the Spirit I commend you, and all the dear family circle.

Ever your affectionate

J. T. N.

LETTER XVIII.

Ipswich, Sept. 8, 1846.

DEAREST ———,

The warmth of the weather seems to destroy the power of intellect in me. I can only commit to writing, thoughts as they are presented to me; I cannot feel a faculty of origination or arrangement.

O that it may be to us "Christ to live, and gain to die!"* that he may be always present to the understanding, even when the heart is too sad, or too cold to feel and enjoy his presence, and to taste his love. Yet, even then let us think, *enumerate* ("I reckon,")† calculate, what it is to have him, though we cannot at present enjoy him,—to have him, who, though not

Phil. i. 21.

† Rom. viii. 13.

always so sweet, is yet as needful, as sufficient, as effectual at one time as at another. And when we thus wait for him, and are looking out from time to time, how blessed is his visit, when he vouchsafes it at last, as relative to the desire we have previously experienced, and laboured to sustain in dependence on his preparing influence, exerted in our hearts !*

And if thus *life* be spent, either in enjoying the Lord's presence, or seeking after it, what gain will it be to *die* ! Every longing after him here, and even his presence, as enjoyed by faith, is after all, full of defect. But what shall it be, and how much will it be heightened by our previous straightened enjoyment of communion with him, to see as we are seen, and "know even as also we are known !" †

Even these few thoughts have gone more towards some faint perception of spiritual things than I have appeared to attain to before this day.

Love to all your dear party.

Your affectionate

J T. N.

LETTER XIX.

Ipswich, Sept. 12, 1846.

DEAREST —,

May that inestimable precious Jesus, once agonized and crucified for you and for me, now our exalted head, and "Head over all things to his church," bestow on you abundantly and continually, out of his

* Psalm x. 17.

† 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

fulness, strength according to your day, and help proportioned to your demands, and fulfil that gracious promise—"I will hold thee by thy right hand, saying, fear not, I am with thee!" *

"He is a very present help in trouble," † and

"Though sometimes unperceived by sense,
Faith sees him always near,
A guide, a glory, a defence,
Then what have we to fear?" ‡

"Flesh and heart indeed must one day fail, but he will be the strength of our hearts and our portion for ever." §

May you be enabled to realize his infinite and exquisitely appropriate perfections, even when you cannot taste the sweetness of their fruits! But may it be his blessed will, that you *may* taste, yea abundantly relish them. May "your heart," under the Spirit's influence, "indite good matter," and may you be enabled to "speak of the things which you have made unto the King." ¶ What a varied, and copious, and elevating subject for meditation is Psalm xlv. 2—7. His person, his spiritual glory, his victories, his wonderfully-combined character of "majesty, truth, meekness, and righteousness." And that all these rays of grace and glory should be collected into a focus to bear upon each of our souls, with their intensest power of salvation. And then as the only efficient way of accomplishing the design, it is the "long-suffering," the patience, which "will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax," ■ which "is," which constitutes, this "salvation." He will not unduly urge a single languid faculty, nor overburden a single infirmity, nor overdrive one sheep of his flock a single day. He knows that, if he did, "the

* Is. xli. 13. † Ps. xlvi. 1. ‡ Olney Hymns, b. iii. h. lxxxiv.

§ Psalm lxxiii. 26.

¶ Ib. xlv. 1.

■ Is. xlii. 3.

spirits should fail before him, and the souls that he has made.* But “he will with every trial and temptation make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it.” † And all to the “praise of the glory of his grace,” in whom we are accepted, and to his also, “who hath made us accepted in him :” ‡ and “that the trial of our faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried in the fire, may be found unto praise and honour and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” § Then our faith will indeed appear glorious, and honourable, to him who gave it and preserved it, and brought it safely through a thousand dangers to complete victory. Meantime, we must expect, that this design will be prepared and matured, in a way not to bring glory to us, but to him. It may be at times by faith’s being “pressed out of measure, above strength,” that it may be seen, “that the excellency of the power is of God, and not of us ||—that it may not appear, that we go into the field furnished for the victory of careless confidence, but that the least supply of that faith which is of heavenly mould and substance, the gift of God, is more than a match for the enemy’s whole force. The Lord bless this feeble word, and I believe he will bless it.

My heart’s love in Christ Jesus be with you

Your affectionate

J. T. N.

* Isaiah lvii. 16.

§ 1 Peter i. 7.

† 1 Cor. x. 13.

|| 2 Cor. i. 3; iv. 7.

‡ Eph. i. 6.

LETTER XX.

Ipswich, Sept. 15, 1846.

DEAREST——,

I have been reading that blessed passage in the family this morning, Psalm lxxv. 1. Surely we are called upon *for*, and furnished *with*, continual praise in this fact, that God's "wondrous works" are every moment declaring his "nearness," the nearness of his saving name to every believing, expecting, observing soul. That I ever had a hope of escaping perdition, was, from the "nearness of God's name," and "his wondrous works," in carrying out his scheme of redemption. And it is this, which has supported us on, in the believing reliance upon his saving word, to this present moment. And that supporting work is as wonderful, and its effects as vivid a proof of his nearness, as ever it was. Such, and so adapted, and so all-sufficient, is our God, and "he that keepeth Israel!" And we need not go to the extent of the wonders of redeeming love. The last night's preservation, the support still more of those, through a wearisome night, who, like yourself, are worn with disease, sufficeth.

I too, may consider "his works to me" as more wonderful, and more sensibly declaring his presence to me, than to many; because I want his help so continually and intensely. I feel so often, as if I should quite knock up, mind and body.

But I must say farewell for the present. Love to all

Your affectionate,

J. T. N.

LETTER XXI.

WRITTEN AFTER HIS FRIEND'S DECEASE, TO HIS BEREAVED
MOTHER.

Sept. 29, 1846.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

May our gracious Lord direct my pen, or rather the thoughts to which my pen gives expression !

How easily could I occupy my time and paper with retracing the scenes and employments and feelings, with which our attention and hearts have been taken up, during that small portion of that long long period of your whole trials, which we did in some measure engage in together ! How our hopes and fears were alternately excited, and night and morning we were afresh called to the fresh exercise of resignation and patience,—to moderate improbable but incompressible hope, and to rouse the languor of yet increasing discouragements ! But what could all this tend to, but to immerse us in the clouds of earthliness, and sense, and mortality ? But, my dear friend, as “this corruptible body,”* over which we mourn, “must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality,” so let us leave the mere outside of events, and look into the unseen world, and what God is doing there, yea, to what he is even doing here below. If we look at the dear object of our cares, what cause can there be but for congratulation ? Never a moment's occasion to cry out any more. “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death ?” †

* 1 Cor. xv. 53.

† Rom. vii. 24.

True, we have lost all opportunity of ministering to his wants, soul or body. But do we not remember, how often we mourned at the little alleviation, which it was evident we could produce? And do we not now know, that he “hungers no more, nor thirsts any more, neither does the sun light on him, nor any heat?”* he knows not what spiritual darkness means, nor indeed any thing less than the perpetual beams of the countenance of Divine love. “The Lord is his everlasting light, and the days of his mourning are ended.”† Do not think I have either the composedness or stoicism not to mourn, much less to suppose that a mother can suppress her wounded feelings for the loss of one so truly, so interestingly, so spiritually amiable. But I mean, that the causes of regret are absolutely swallowed up in the causes of rejoicing and thanksgiving; so that we are conscious, that if we had been offered his release previously, we could no more have refused the boon, nor can we, now that he is taken out of the miseries of this sinful world, any more wish him back again, than we could, in the days of his comparative health, have consented, that he should have been sacrificed by a violent and tormenting death. If Paul could be “exceeding joyful *in* all his tribulations,” how should we feel, that dearest — is delivered *out* of them all!

Then for ourselves. I have scarce been permitted to “touch the burden with one of my fingers;” though I bless the Lord for being permitted to be a stander-by. The Lord grant that I may find it “better to have gone to the house of mourning, than to the house of feasting.”‡ and that by the sorrow, by which in the course of his disease, my countenance has been

* Rev. vii. 16.

† Is. lx. 20.

‡ Eccles. vii. 2, 3.

made sad, my heart also may be made better, and that as a survivor I may lay it to my heart ! But with you, my dear friends, and your dear family, the case is far different—Your cares, affections, and devoted attentions, which God has given for the equable and distributive comfort and benefit of the whole domestic society, have been concentrated upon one dear individual. It has been your honour and delight to find, this was God's appointment, and to give yourselves to it with your whole hearts, and with your whole souls. It was compliance with a Scriptural injunction, "one member suffered, and the other members suffered with it," *—a Scriptural copy of his example, who "was afflicted in all our afflictions," who "bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows." †

But it was an *extraordinary*, not an ordinary dispensation, and it should be matter of thanksgiving, that the Lord now restores you to the discharge of duties, and the exercise of affections, of which all and each are in turn the subjects and the objects. And be it observed—this change of cares and duties is not from one thing to another that is unconnected with it. But though the two occupations of mind and heart at the two periods are exceedingly different from each other in many points of view, they are by that very variety connected, and the engagements and employments of the period that is just ended, are exactly calculated to provide for the more complete and effectual discharge of those duties, and for the cultivation of those exercises of the affections, which form the general exertions and employments of life in the period to which you are now returning.

If you retain, my dear friend, as I trust you and

* 1 Cor. xii. 26.

† Is. lxiii. 9; liii. 4.

my younger friends do, a wise and tender, a dutiful and thankful recollection of the way in which the Lord has been leading you, (those I mean especially, who have surrounded the sick bed,) you will carry the influence of this remembrance into all the domestic intercourse of future life. You will keep up to those subjects of conversation and communication of thought, to that tone, and that elevation, which make life a preparation for death, not only by individual meditation, but by the mutual, habitual endeavour, to interest one another on these subjects; so that this may become habitually easy and natural; and when any one is sick, and common subjects become less welcome, the opportunity may be immediately hailed, and seized, and improved for entering with facility, with vigour, and with enjoyment upon the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

And, if this be done, your late employments and experience will tell you, how vastly, how efficiently it will contribute to every comfort and enjoyment in life; how it will secure “the promise of this life, as well as that which is to come.” What an influence it will shed upon the declining years of Mr. —, and yourself—how it will diffuse itself into the future families and domestic comforts of each of your dear children!

Love to all.

Your affectionate,

J. T. N.

LETTER XXII.

TO THE SAME.

Ipswich, Nov. 30, 1846.

Well, dearest friend, how is it with you? I trust we were appointed before the world was, to be bound to each other in that best of bonds, a Christian friendship; and I hope the Lord did assure us of this, and go on to cement this union, and provide for its completion in eternity, by bringing us to his throne of grace together, beside dear — in his declining health, and last days on earth, which at the time, and since, have been to me some of the most interesting seasons I have had on earth. Oh! that we may have them always in remembrance, and *that* with deeper and deeper impression, stirring us up to never-ceasing, but still increasing, diligence, yea, agonizing exertions, and wrestling prayers to “make our calling and election sure.”

Certainly we shall fall short of the promised rest, if we are not labouring after it in earnest. And as certainly we shall not fall short, if we are in earnest. For he who is “the way, and the truth, and life”—spiritual to us now, and life eternal to us hereafter—hath said—“Fear not, little flock; it is my Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”* By all the attractions of that kingdom, by the prospect of surrounding the throne, and ascribing our happiness with the sure prospect of its eternal continuance, to God and the Lamb, I beseech you, pray and strive with

* Luke xii. 32.

me, that we may labour without ceasing after this blessed consummation. May we ply our Lord with our cries and supplications, till he send us help, and grace, and strength, and until we can in some measure find and feel, that we are growing in the knowledge of Him, and experiencing its increasing power, in our inward comfort and establishment, and manifesting the same increase in loving Christ, and commending Christ. Do, my dear friend, pray for me, that this may be my blessed privilege ; and do tell me any thing, which the Lord from time to time puts before your mind, and in your heart, and by which you may help me with an argument, an exhortation, a direction, an encouragement to any additional step, any more vigorous exertion in the race that is set before us. Furnish me with all the intelligence you can of what the precious Lord Jesus has done, and is doing for your soul, that may shew him in some position, and some exercise of his marvellous pity, patience, forbearance, exquisite tenderness, Almighty fulness, and variety and efficiency of grace.

Do pray write as soon as you have half an hour at liberty, without intruding on the demands of duty, and let me know as much as you can about you all. My love to the whole circle.

Hoping for the gratification of hearing from you shortly, believe me affectionately yours in the Lord.

J. T. N.

We mark in this, as in a former series, the wise and faithful counsellor gradually winning his way into the confidence of his correspondent, under circumstances of peculiar trial. This once gained, the full tide of parental interest flowed in all the sympathies of Christian affection, in an uninterrupted course to the close of life.

LETTERS.

LETTER I.

March 15, 1825.

MY DEAR ———,

You have professed yourself a soldier of Jesus Christ, and you will probably be called upon in that character to “endure hardness,” and to “fight the good fight of faith,” in the hottest place of conflict between the armies of the Lord of Hosts, and those which are opposed to them. You must consider therefore under what circumstances, and with what weapons, you must serve him.

There are four things that specially occur to my mind, which you should bend all the strength of prayer and diligence to attain during the short interval of preparation that is before you.—*Self-possession—activity of intellect—gentleness, and cheerfulness.*

Self-possession. It is the encouraging exhortation of our Lord to his disciples, amidst concussions in which the world is to end.—“In your patience possess ye your souls.”* Now you will be called upon for this composure, (not only the possession, but the actual exercise of it); and you will not have the opportunity

* Luke xxi. 19.

that many have, when occasions of anxiety and unsettlement occur, of retiring for prayer, consideration, and calming your mind by reading the promises, invitations, and assurances of the word of God. You must take those methods for composure, which are always at hand.

Remember then, that you have upon the faith of "the record, that God hath given of his Son" in the Gospel, put yourself into his hands through the interposition and mediation of Jesus Christ—the Friend and Saviour of enquiring, returning sinners—for time and eternity. Remember also—that God hath engaged to take charge of all, who have done, and are doing, this ; and to carry them through all danger, safe to everlasting happiness. If doubt sometimes arise in your mind, whether in consenting to this covenant with God, you did it with your whole heart ; it will be a support to recollect any thing at the time, that confirmed the idea of your sincerity.

But remember—all that is absolutely necessary is this—'Do I *now* believe? Do I *now* this moment, as the moment passes along, confirm the agreement afresh, and acquiesce in God as my Saviour, my Ruler, and my Portion?' Then you are and must be safe. And in this way study to maintain or recover the sense of safety at any time. Bid your soul return unto rest upon the engagement and assurance of an unchangeable God. In this way of returning continually to the argument drawn from the truth of the testimony of God, under his blessing you will find your mind strengthened. There are various statements calculated to give help in different degrees. But they are all virtually included in this. And there is a simplicity and promptness in the answers with which it furnishes the mind in every assault, that renders it the best

weapon, to which we can habitually accustom ourselves. Aim then at continual composure. Check every thing like hurry and trepidation with this thought—‘God is engaged to provide for me. The Lord is my Shepherd : I shall not want ; I need not fear.’ Cultivate the most familiar, continual application of this truth.

Then avoid all instrumental cause of discomposure. I need hardly tell you, that the “conscience must be kept void of” wilful “offence towards God and man.” And nothing tends more to preserve us in this state, than that composure, which arises from having God for a friend. For this continually represents to the soul, that we do not want to sin in order to be happy, and gives further time also to consider, how certain it is (plausibly as appearance may suggest the contrary,) that sin will make us unhappy.

There is one particular, connected with this part of my letter, upon which I wish to be very earnest with you—*Your health*. You must attend to this with the *most scrupulous care*. All your habitual readiness for service depends upon this, humanly speaking, and by the Lord’s providential appointment. You must avoid therefore all unfounded anxieties, and magnifying apprehension of future possible dangers and difficulties, and fly to the consideration already proposed for composure of mind—‘The Lord will provide, for time and for eternity. I have nothing to do, but diligently to use the means, and confidently wait the event.’ The enemy gains no small advantage, when he persuades us to waste that strength in the exhausting contemplation of imaginary dangers, which might have been employed against real ones, when they occurred.

You must avoid every—even the least—invasion of your hours of rest, or whatever would prevent the

soundest sleep, that exercise, cheerfulness, and freedom from carefulness, will with the Lord's blessing secure. Every other precaution and endowment may be rendered fruitless, if you should, by too much study, or anxiety, or want of a *full* portion of sleep, induce a nervous and hurried state of constitution. No sacrifice, that does not endanger faith and the love of God, is too great to secure all the health you can. No study or accomplishment will be to you of a thousandth part of the importance.

I shall now offer a few suggestions for the cultivation of your understanding, with a view to clearness and readiness in discovering, retaining, and defending, truth. Never suffer any important statement to pass the sieve of your understanding, without bolting the flour from the bran. To discover truth, hold it fast, feed upon it, and defend it. This must be your life; and this may often be done as much and as well in five minutes, as in as many hours, if the mind is accustomed to promptness. Long deliberation often proceeds from some degree of error admitted into the mind. Great truths are generally clear and obvious at first sight, if we take them without mixture, and without disguise.

Accustom yourself to receive truth the moment you discover it; to reject error the moment you detect it. And when assaulted by any kind of temptation, never suffer your understanding to be deceived. If sin be ever so urgent in its pleadings, yet determine, that at least, it shall not make a fool of you, nor retain its plausibility, however it may continue its importunity. A sin at worst is but *an act*. But an excuse for sin is *a principle*, to be applied to every future temptation: and therefore the foundation of a habit—perhaps for life. Read Watts's Improvement of the Mind again

and again, and, as you read, apply his remarks to your own peculiar circumstances, and see wherein they are likely to be practically useful to you.

In the last place—as I look upon your needle, that is to do a great deal of work, I must remind you, that you not only want *the eye* of understanding to carry your thread, and *the point* of a good constitution carefully attended to, which will not bend when it has difficult work ; but you must have the needle's polish too ; otherwise you will tear, where you endeavour to mend, or inflame where you might heal. And here I would again say—Be content to sacrifice a thousand things, all important in their place, but of inferior moment to this, and especially for you. Be content, if it were necessary (which it is not) to be considered a simpleton, that cannot master the multiplication-table, provided you can acquire the variety of combinations of sentiment, voice, feature, manner, patience, and cheerfulness, which, as far as possible, shall never offend, often conciliate, and at last win.

Your affectionate,
J. T. N.

LETTER II.

April 11, 1825.

DEAR — — ,

I snatch my pen to thank you for your interesting communications, and to reply to some of the most important parts of them. The Apostle gives us the state of mind, as well as the armour of the believer—"Be

strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might : ” and then—“ Put on the whole armour of God.” *

Now what is to make us, (instrumentally) “ strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might ? ” A simple, habitual reliance on the atonement of Christ, as securing our pardon,—the righteousness of Christ, as constituting our justification ; and the perpetual intercession of Christ, as obtaining for us these, and every other blessing, every moment. A habit of promptness in continually apprehending and appropriating these, is the foundation of every thing. This is the “ faith that worketh by love ; and love is the principle of obedience, and makes hard things easy, and bitter things sweet.

But observe, a *habit of promptness*—not long meditation (except at proper opportunities) but ready, instant application, like the drowning man for help, the fainting man for cordial. Then up again, in dependence upon an answer, and renew the race. Re-commence the employment. Enter with fresh vigour upon the warfare. Now this faith is the all-sufficient foundation of self-possession, activity of intellect, gentleness, and cheerfulness. “ Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ.” † This consciousness of Divine friendship will give self-possession, energy, and gentleness, at all times, in proportion as it is in exercise. Therefore accustom yourself to the contemplation of it, as a certain truth ; a truth not to be questioned ; true in its fullest extent. Apply continually for this blessing. Continually endeavour to improve it, by “ living to Him who died for you,” and to exemplify it in those particulars which I have just mentioned.

* Eph. vi. 10, 11.

† Rom. v. 1.

I will now endeavour to speak to that part of your letter, which refers to the study of Scripture—the great storehouse of principles.

The way in which I read it, has reference to the purposes for which I read it. First, I want to know “what I must do to be saved.” I take up the book eagerly, to find what it has to say on this point. I find this is the one object, to which the whole Bible tends. I often renew my application to the sacred volume for those passages, which speak with most distinctness upon this all-important subject, and those in particular, which apply to the present state of my own feelings, circumstances, and wants. 2ndly. I want to have as large and connected a view of Scripture as possible; that I may, as far as practicable, bring the concentrated effect of it to bear upon each particular point. For this, a convenient distribution of the whole seems to be, to read a chapter every day in each of the following divisions, (or take half that number every other day.)—One chapter in the historical books, from Genesis to Esther—one in the experimental books, from Job to the Song of Solomon—one in the prophets, and one or two in the New Testament. 3rdly. I want perhaps a collected view of Scripture statement upon some particular point of doctrine, experience, or practice. Then I resort to Scott, or some book of references, and collect as much as seems expedient for my purpose, so as not to interrupt other duties. This is all I shall suggest at present, except my request, that you will, if possible, never open or close the volume without distinctly, considerately, (however briefly) imploring the Divine blessing and teaching. This book is the repository, from which your armour must be taken: prayer is the means of receiving it. Consider every piece of the armour and

its use, and apply continually to be both furnished and instructed.

Having thus adverted to the soldier's state of mind—an habitual persuasion of the favour of God—and the armour in which he is to go forth, I shall add a suggestion or two on the actual exercise of a mind thus disposed, and clad in the subordinate habits of self-possession, activity, gentleness, and cheerfulness.

First.—Always pursue these practically. Exercise them at every moment, however feeble the exertion may be, however frequent the defeats, however interrupted the perseverance. One practical struggle after either of these, (and they are all connected, and help one another,) is worth an hour's contemplation.

Secondly. You need never want opportunity with respect to the two latter. And if you are aiming perseveringly at gentleness and cheerfulness, you will not want opportunities of exercising self-possession. This is the child of peace with God, and the parent of kindness to our fellow-creatures. Again, you need not want opportunity for activity of intellect, and discovery and inculcation of truth. Endeavour to awake your companions from their slumber. Exercise ingenuity in the choice of the methods of recommending truth, and in detecting the several methods by which it is evaded; and be assured that this will be excellent practice, against you come out into the larger world. Unbelief is in its principles, the same in every unconverted heart; and you will find these principles—independence of God, and idolatry of self—as really in the heart and ways of a child, as of the mature, sagacious, determined unbeliever, whether professing or disavowing Christianity. This study, begun now, will have one special advantage. It will easily shew you the perfect uniformity of the human heart, under

all circumstances ; and that whatever disguises it may actually assume, you are to treat it as the same, and vary your address or application, in appearance only, to meet the corresponding appearance of variation ; while the real substance of what you propose preserves that unaltered unity, which the unvarying nature of your object calls for.

Again, I entreat you to take special care of your health. Eat deliberately. Take regular exercise. Let nothing entrench upon your hours of sleep. You will do in ten minutes, if you have your fair proportion of rest, what without it you cannot accomplish in as many hours. You must be always ready for cheerful, powerful exertion.

Believe me, faithfully yours,

J. T. N.

LETTER III.

Dec. 20, 1825.

MY DEAR ———,

I am very much delighted, that you have thrown off the mask, though it was not so thick, but that I could discover you beneath it. Nothing would give me greater pleasure, than to continue a friendship, which has for its aim the acquirement of a sound understanding in the things of God, and a decision in the cause of my dear Redeemer, to whom, for pitying me in my low estate, and “plucking me as a brand from the burning,” I am laid under continued and increasing obligations to augment the number of his faithful followers, and to stimulate those who have begun to fear him. I think I see the germ of piety in your heart—a sincere desire to know and do the will of

God, and a willingness to be instructed in the doctrines of the Gospel. These are very gratifying evidences, that at least your judgment is convinced of the importance of religion, as the "one thing needful," and that your heart's fallow ground is harrowed up to receive the seed of the word. Still, it is incumbent on me to tell you, that these things may exist in the mind, without saving conversion to God. How many young trees, covered with beautiful blossoms in spring, have not a single specimen of fruit on their boughs in autumn! And how many, who have begun, with good resolutions, and determined attention to Divine things, through misplaced confidence and worldly snares, have departed out of the world apostates from God! O let not this be the case with my dear ——. Decision of character is the requirement of Christ. He esteems all our professions, without this, "as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal." "No man, having put his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" *—are his own decisive words. He will not receive a divided heart. There is no division of heart in him for us. There was no hesitation on his part to give his life for our redemption: and shall we be backward unreservedly to give ourselves to him? Surely such a Saviour deserves our all. For what we give him makes him not more happy or blessed. But our gift to him is to be repaid with interest to ourselves again, in peace, joy, salvation and glory. Who then that feels the value of his soul, as you, I trust, do, would hesitate to answer his demand—"My son, give me thy heart," as Dr. Watts did—

“Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.”

* Luke ix. 62.

I am not ignorant of your peculiar trials of mind, the difficulties which lie in your way to a total surrender of your heart to Christ; and the many, many severe furnaces of affliction through which you must pass, if you would “come out from the world, and be separate.” But let not these things intimidate you. “Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.”* These are the terms upon which Jesus engaged you to be his disciple. “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, *and take up his cross daily and follow me.*† The servant must not be above his Lord.” If then your Lord passed through such seas of trouble, must you expect to be exempt? “But who can tell”—as Mordecai said to Esther—“but that thou art brought to the kingdom for such a time as this?”‡ Who can tell but that by your decided attachment to God and his ways, you may be the instrument of salvation to all your household? Do not think this an improbable case. God can give the tongue of the learned to the most diffident and unlikely, when his purposes of mercy are to be accomplished. A little captive maid, by a wish, is the instrument of healing her master, Naaman. Little Samuel can deliver a message to good old Eli, and even a crowing cock can be a preacher to Peter. Be you but courageous for him, and he will bless you, and make you a blessing. And if none of these things happen, yet your own soul is a jewel of incomparable importance to you; if that is lost, all is lost.

Behold then the Redeemer inviting you to come, and be his servant and child. O let not his call be in vain. Nothing on his part is an impediment to your joys. All arises from a heart of unbelief. Go therefore, my dear friend, to that precious—precious Saviour, who

* 1 John iv. 4.

† Luke ix. 23.

‡ Esther iv. 14.

received me, and give yourself to him. Cast yourself wholly upon his meritorious blood and righteousness.

Do not be shy of me. I will not break your head with my club, or frown you from my presence. As far as I can be at any time useful to your eternal interest, you may command me. "Now the God of peace make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ." *

Your affectionate
J. T. N.

LETTER IV.

Jan. 22, 1826.

MY DEAR —,

I trust that Christ has enlisted you as a soldier in his army. Now is the time then, that he calls you out to actual warfare. See not the enemy attacking your citadel with determined effrontery, and sit still in the garrison. Look into the armoury. What weapons are souls in your situation to use? Does not this direction meet your case?—"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." † This shield is impenetrable. No fiery dart, though dipped in the lake of brimstone, can injure you, if it be upborne against your foe. Search what promises are suitable to your condition. See what God says he will do for you, and this, if you believe in him, will soon make you plead

* Heb. xiii. 20, 21.

† Eph. vi. 16.

with him. Read Ezek. xi. 19, 20. xxxvi. 25—27. Mark,—“*that they may walk*, and “*cause you to walk.*” &c.

The evils, of which you complain, are unconquerable by your own strength. You must lean on an Almighty arm, and trust to him, who has Satan a chained enemy, and is now perhaps trying your love to him, or proving whether you have any at all. O for your soul's sake, if you prize salvation, Christ, and heaven, give not way to Satan. Let this be an examining time with you. “*Prove your ownself.*” * Beg of God to discover to you *yourself*—to lay his work deep, that the foundation may never be shaken. Look to Christ, and live. Suffer not Satan to tear you from his fold, or induce you once more to turn your back on your best friend. Let him but have your heart, and he will soon have your lips.

Yours affectionately,

J. T. N.

LETTER V.

Feb. 7, 1826.

MY DEAR —,

I told you, some time ago, that the one endeavour of your spiritual enemy is, to wear out your confidence by degrees; to suggest that now, at least, you have been so ungrateful, that your God will forgive you no more. This once admitted, the sinews of obedience, desire and hope, are cut asunder. But so long as we can go to the throne of grace in a state of guilt and

* 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

banishment, praying to be restored, and pleading the promises of unlimited forgiveness to the returning sinner, there is something to act upon the desire of walking in new obedience with that God, who thus heals the most desperate wounds of sin, and cleanses from its deepest defilement. Go then, when you can, with collected, deliberate prayer—when you cannot, with groans, and sighs, and unceasing ejaculations, to him who hath said—“ he will in no wise cast out the sinner that comes to him ”*—of whom David said,—“ He restoreth my soul ; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.” † Incessantly beg that Spirit, which persuades, and leads the soul to Jesus.

And then, in dependence upon the promise to give that strength which you have asked, exert yourself in resisting those things which displease our heavenly Father, wound conscience, and darken our eyes to every spiritual object. Resume the endeavour in the same dependence, to wait in the use of all the means of grace, and to accomplish the respective duties of every day. And remember, never to despise the smallest success, or the smallest attempt. A moment of prayer is worth a world. A single sin avoided, is better than the ransom of a king. We often fail by undervaluing what has a reference to God, the relation to whom gives trifles an infinite value. If we have anything like a feeling that we are not to do anything, because we are disappointed of doing all, we have given up the principle of faith, and substituted self-pleasing, and self-exaltation.

Believe me, it would be truly delightful to hear, that you are struggling to regain your former views and experience, and a real cup of bitterness to know,

* John vi. 37.

† Ps. xxiii. 3.

that you yield the noble contest, in which you have engaged.

Affectionately yours,

J. T. N.

LETTER VI.

Oct. 26, 1826.

DEAR ———,

I am much concerned about the state of your mind. “How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.” *

But you will say—‘I do not halt between two opinions, but between the practical effects of them.’ This is principally, if not altogether, what Elijah intended.

Well! that I may not distract your attention by too many different suggestions, I will just say what I have to say on this one view of the matter. *That not only is the service of Christ vastly preferable to self and the world, but so preferable, that the smallest advantage gained—the smallest retro-gradation prevented, is worth any sacrifice—any exertion.*

The grand weight, I think, when we would, but cannot, resolve to return, is this—‘I can do nothing to any purpose.’ But I have found just the contrary to be the truth—that where my fettered, discouraged, soul ever attempted to take a step forward, or to resist taking a step backward, from a sense of the infinite value of the favour of God, the love of Christ, or

* 1 Kings xviii. 21.

any feeling that involves an estimate of the infinite value of Divine friendship, I never attempted such an effort wholly in vain.

View me as a prisoner. My life has been spent in escaping from the world, by digging through obstacles like a wall of stone, thirty feet thick, at the rate of half an inch in a week, or a month. Only try something persevering: and the Lord will be with you. You will see God's servants are very sensible of the infinite value of the least atom of what belongs to him. "Take not the word of truth *utterly* out of my mouth." * That word *utterly*, though it seems beneath the notice of the mind, when one has got very low, is, in reality, one of the most blessed words in that blessed book. How often, when I have formerly been upon the brink of giving up all for lost, and of saying—'Evil, be thou my good!'—the thought has perhaps struck me, that while I am struggling between despondency and rebellion, and too hard, too cold, too discouraged to look up to him, the blessed Redeemer is pitying the struggle of my soul: and it has kept me where I was, led me to put off despair at least till to-morrow—and then, before to-morrow I have seen something of the grace and glory of the gospel.

Dispute every hair's breadth of ground. If you can get five minutes for prayer, for scripture, or for thought, or for being alone, even without prayer, or scripture, or thought, seize on it as an inestimable jewel. If you can pass but five minutes less in foolish, ensnaring company, secure the advantage. If, when something that may discourage the good, and amuse the Lord's enemies (visible or invisible) is about to escape your lips, you can repress it; look upon it as a triumph and

a mercy. And when you are most deeply deploring your sins, never fail to thank the Lord, or at least to think how you would thank him, if you dared lift up a face overwhelmed with shame and defeat, that he has not taken away his truth UTTERLY—that he has left you clinging to some twig of hope, instead of leaving you to find—what thousands, who look outwardly very calm, have found—the depth of the precipice of despair. The grandeur of the principle, that sees God, and invests every thing respecting him, with a character of infinite importance, will do much, even when actual, material movement is very trifling.

But I am at the end of my paper. The Lord bless you !

Faithfully yours,

J. T. N.

LETTER VII.

March 12, 1827.

DEAR ———,

I will no longer delay telling you how very cheering your communications were to me. It was indeed as a message from Heaven itself, to hear that the appalling stagnation of your spiritual frame was dispelled ; and that the Spirit of God was again exciting its influence upon your heart, and the Sun of Righteousness again arising before you with healing in its beams. It bid me hope, when I could see nothing but discouragement. It bid me speak, and not hold my peace, where I should have been inclined to think, that I might have “darkened counsel by words without knowledge.”

Then another reason for my snatching a moment to write, is to remind you, that whenever you have resolution again to remember so discouraging a correspondent, a little further intelligence of what the Lord is doing for your soul, will be equally welcome. Indeed it may be again blessed to “strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees,” of which ministers, as well as their flocks, have experience. Indeed, if they had not, they would perhaps want the discipline, which gives ability to “speak a word in season to them that are weary.”

But I have thought of a way, in which I may be your correspondent, even when I am not writing. Read, if you find that you are not distasted with its peculiarities, Bunyan’s Holy War. I think, if you can overlook the style and scheme of writing, you will find many remarks so spiritually correct, in the experience you have lately passed through, and such a touching expression of the Lord’s pity and love to returning sinners, *even while he hides his face*, that you will be interested and edified.

And though I never had a hundredth part of Bunyan’s natural talent, or spiritual gift, yet some of his views and mine are so much alike, that I shall not wonder, if you sometimes think you are reading a dispatch from Ipswich.

But I have only time to add that I am,

Faithfully yours,

J. T. N.

LETTER VIII.

July 22, 1827.

MY DEAR ———,

Perhaps nothing is more likely, especially at your age, to threaten the life and energy of religion, than desultoriness. Therefore one principal matter that I would insist upon at present, is plan. You will not however mistake me so far, as to conclude, that I think plan is any thing of itself; yet it is subservient in very important respects, to the Lord's gracious designs for his people. "Occupy till I come"*—was the Saviour's command to his people, in the language of the parable. And in this view, I would have you think it worth while, even with considerable difficulty and self-denial, to attempt some plan, by which employment and improvement of the whole of life, in all its minute successive portions, may be effected for Him, who died. that we might live.

You have not merely been wonderfully drawn out of the world at first; but, by a marvel of grace, you have been brought back, after having fallen into a backsliding frame, and that, in such a manner, as to make a deep impression upon your heart.

Remember what those objects are—eternal and infinite—which produced that impression. Dwell on the reality of them; even when you cannot recall the delight, with which their impression was at first, and has been often since accompanied. When this is perseveringly kept in view, the Lord will not be wanting in "restoring the joy of his salvation."

* Luke xix. 13.

If you would take the readiest way to the habitual enjoyment of communion with God, strive for a regular, and, as much as is consistent with your general health, an early hour of rising. Let self-examination and prayer be engaged in with earnestness, and let progress be always kept in view. I mean an advancing in the exercise of the life of faith. Aim, for instance, at getting more clear and convincing views of the character of God, as *a reconciled Father in Christ*. The consideration of him in that relation, is what gives exercise to the spiritual faculties and affections; and these, as in natural existence, are the life of life. Again: *aim at advancing knowledge of yourself*, from repeated self-examination. Let it not be merely the execution of that duty at that time; but let it have a retrospect on the result of the last examination, and an anticipation of some progressive views, particularly as concerns the deceitfulness and deceivableness of the heart, and its particular kinds and habits of deceit. And again—as respects the habitual experience of a life of faith in the Redeemer—something of advance in the holy art of maintaining this, should be looked for, and (in answer to prayer, and in the persevering use of means, with this in view,) may be expected. In examination, step beyond the humbling conviction of having sinned. See the folly of ingratitude to God—What an evil and a bitter thing to forsake him, even for a few minutes, when he is leading us by the way! Get more and more of this view, that to walk with God, to lean on Christ, is the only path of elevation and happiness. Religion, if it is to guide and bless us, must do so, by laying continually faster hold upon the *understanding*.

Get some description daily, and here also aim at being on the advance. “Let the word of Christ

dwelling in you richly in all wisdom." * Let this precept, which enforces the practice, serve for an illustration of the principle. Let the word be contemplated and used, with reference to its one great object: to manifest the power, faithfulness, and tenderness of the Saviour; to exercise the soul in all that belongs to the character of one, whose "life is hid with Christ in God;" who, though visibly and tangibly conversant with earth, is really a citizen of an unseen, eternal "city, whose builder and maker is God:" the immortal child of an invisible parent; the possessor of privileges, as vast and infinite, as to the world they are remote and incomprehensible.

As I am now looking particularly to stated seasons of prayer, meditation, and reading Scripture, I would suggest, that the conclusion of the day should correspond with its commencement. Let it be your object, not merely, (though this is of unspeakable importance) to be humbled for sin, but to recal, when you retire from the world, the distinct apprehension of the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of darkness. Strip from the world those plausibilities in which, during the preceding day, it has exhibited itself, and take the Scripture description of it—the empire of Satan—and contemplate the power, the reality, the nearness of the kingdom of Christ. Otherwise, we are in danger of falling insensibly, in our self-examination and prayer, into the mere consideration of things to be done, and things to be avoided; without reference to their connection with eternal realities, from which they in fact derive all their character and importance. We must contemplate one cause and the other; one kingdom and the other: the head of

* Col. iii. 16.

one and the other : the irreconcilable opposition—
 “ If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him ; ” * the certain subjugation of one to the other.—“ He must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.” † We seldom *see* anything of the superiority of Christ’s kingdom ; and therefore it is necessary, that faith should be habitually employed in referring to it ; in ascertaining that the lowest of religion is better than the best of the world. It is necessary still more, to sustain the believer under all his defeats within as well as without, when he retires to his closet, and looks back on the forgotten prayers and broken resolutions of the morning, how important it is to dwell on the contemplation of the unchangeableness, (amid his own mutability) of eternal objects : that the throne of grace is still open, though he has made his way to it difficult and uneasy, that the approach of the burdened soul is welcome to God, however painful to itself.

Faithfully yours,
 J. T. N.

LETTER IX.

Sept. 29, 1827.

MY DEAR ———,

Without waiting for a time, when I may be more able to collect my thoughts, I have seized my pen, and am already on my way towards the conclusion of a sheet.

When I think of any friend, and am endeavouring to conclude the greatest amount of my wishes for their

* 1 John ii. 15.

† 1 Cor. xv. 25.

welfare, into the compass of a few words ; I endeavour to think what those views are, which I find most conducive to my happiness at all times. I try to discover what that simple principle is, which, like the motion of the heart or of the lungs in animal life, accompanies the soul that is spiritually alive at every moment ; expands with its enjoyments, and in its severest conflicts never quite ceases ; but serves, though less consciously, under the most unfavourable circumstances, to support the spiritual existence : and as soon as the morbid symptom within, or the threatening pressure from without, is passed, shews itself in a more free respiration, a more composed self-possession, and a more conscious satisfaction.

The Scripture, I think, furnishes us with the knowledge of such a principle, and experience proves to us that it *is* really, and that it *does* really, what we might expect from it. I mean the “belief that God is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”*

Of course I do not mean a mere speculative belief of his existence, nor such a feeble belief of his claims, as many even sincere Christians are satisfied with. I mean that acknowledgment of his supreme character and authority, which habitually makes him the determiner of all questions. To say—‘I must’—before you have ascertained what the will of God is upon the point, is at least very inconsistent with the respect to the Divine authority, which arises out of a clear belief of God’s being, as a God—that is, Supreme.

But to say—‘I must’—when I know his mind to be clear against it, is, for the time, absolutely denying the existence of God, as God. And this view of the matter is equally correct with respect to his other

* Heb. xi. 6.

attributes. To trust my own conjecture as to the expediency of any step, or the probabilities of the consequences of it, in opposition to a clear command or direction ; is to strip the Deity of one of his essential attributes, so that in that instance we have acted as if satisfied there was no God. The Being we call by that name, is certainly not what that name expresses, if we know better than He ; or if we may with impunity slight the declarations of his will. Either he will chasten and bring us back ; or they who disobey him, will find the eternal consequences of his wrath. Without this habitual view of God, as the Maker and Governor of his creatures, there is no foundation for that view, in which we consider him as the “rewarder of him that diligently seek him.”

In proportion as our minds are by the gracious influences of the Spirit (sought for by prayer,) formed to a sensitive promptness of apprehending the supremacy of God, and a spontaneous uneasiness when we have lost that feeling ; so far we feel the lively satisfaction from the continual open way of return to God, through the blood and intercession of the Mediator. When I constantly feel, that God has a supreme right to determine for me in every thing ; that he always determines according to my best interests ; that in Christ I have full and sure pardon of every opposition to this truth, in heart and conduct, under which my conscience labours ; and that the Spirit of God is, in answer to prayer, forming me to this frame of mind, and that no truth is, to the mind that will contemplate it, so obvious as this, which every body is stepping over, as it were, without dwelling upon it ; then I shall be habitually happy. The will of the wisest and kindest of beings, who is at the same time the Almighty ruler of all things, will be a reason for

every thing; and without it, *I could have a reason for nothing.* And his promises give a bright prospect at every step of life, whether the ground we occupy at the moment be painful or pleasant.

I see that from labouring against continual confusion of brain, I have got into a kind of harsh, abstract statement. But I believe that it would be a great acquisition, if we could all feel what is certainly true, that every moment of unhappiness proceeds from suffering the mind to tamper with the perfectness of some of the Divine attributes; and that the continual guarding against this one habit of the mind, would manifest itself in an almost immediate increase of happiness, and diffuse its balmy influence over every moment of life, supporting for the present, and encouraging for the future—Give your thoughts a little upon the subject.

Your affectionate friend and servant in the Lord,
J. T. N.

LETTER X.

March 19, 1823.

MY DEAR ——,

The rapidity of time, and the pressure of continual engagements, are making their usual opposition to my replying to your letter, while it is sufficiently fresh in my mind to render my reply a word in season. The difficulties however, of which you complain, are, from my own experience, and observation of others, so often attended with consequences formidable to peace of conscience, that I must get a word or two on paper upon the case you have stated. If I succeed in sug-

gesting anything that really applies to your present experience, it will derive all its little value from being offered, while your sketch of yourself and of your feelings is lying before me. And even if I should not appear to you to speak to the purpose, I may yet set your own mind on an investigation, which may terminate in better success than I have attained. But from want of time to arrange my thoughts, you must expect to find them presenting more the appearance of patch-work, than of a deliberately-planned and harmoniously-executed train of reflections.

Allow me to remind you, that the true habitual safety of the believer, is, in knowing that in himself there is nothing but subject of danger and apprehension, and in employing this thought, to drive himself continually to Christ for help. "I live,"—says the Apostle,—“nevertheless, not I, but Christ liveth in me.”* But there is a continual tendency in us to forget this. And I suspect that the idea has, unperceived, crept into your mind, that it was possible to arrive at such a state of habitual profession and exercise of gracious dispositions, that our danger and exposure shall be, in some degree, diminished; when we shall become less liable to be surprised and overcome; when acquired grace shall, as it were, spontaneously act of itself, shall look to the Saviour without effort, and conduct the warfare with our enemies by a sort of standing orders, that leave little necessity for specific watching, detecting circumstantially and minutely opposing the present temptation of every moment.

Now, I apprehend the real growth of experience in the advanced believer, is the more absolute giving up of every such expectation, and the more constant crying, like a child—“Hold thou me up, and I shall

* Gal. ii. 20.

be safe." * The consummate wisdom of Christianity is a clear and more convincing apprehension, and a more habitual profession of its simplest elements. In this it is quite unlike all other attainments. Does not your experience of defeat lead to the question, whether the idea of watchfulness, (if indeed it has been adequately contemplated) has not been separated from incessant dependence upon Christ, and incessant application to him? May this experience of discomfiture, be sanctified to the correction of this mistake!

All situations have their advantages and disadvantages. I bless God for the comfort of spiritual society. But I find it often has a tendency to make faith trust to its crutches, rather than to use its limbs. Danger, understood and improved, is the finest help imaginable. The foot of Vesuvius, with all its paradisaical verdure, would never lull a thoughtful mind into security. A person of reflection would, in such a situation, be, humanly speaking, more habitually prepared for death, and estimate visibles and invisibles, with ten thousand times the correctness of the inhabitants of a less endangered district. Prayer and the Bible will be preservatives, when they are felt to be privileges: and if they are to be felt to be privileges, they must be understood to be so. There must be an habitual understanding of this point. Your present happiness in God every moment, consists in your affectionate, *intelligent* preference of him. Temptation to indifference to the love of God, and much more to depart from him, would never take effect, if the understanding were not, for the time, imposed upon. There is a—"Yea, hath God said?"—which has been suffered to create a false argument in the mind, and lead to the supposition, that for this once, disobedience, or languid

* Psalm cxix. 117.

obedience, would be more for our comfort. Otherwise, neither the wish, nor the pursuit, of sin of omission or commission, could take place. Now this distinct prevarication, which the tempter is always practising, cannot be opposed by the mere habitual persuasion, however true, of the happiness of preferring God and his ways. Nor will any habits of affection and devotedness, or recollection of past experience, stand against it. It must be the present intelligent conviction, that it is better for me, under present circumstances, to make the sacrifice, or endure the inconvenience, or persevere in the effort required, than not to do it. And it is perhaps from want of this, that so many sincere Christians, fall into a dull, heartless, undelighted profession. They are not applying the high privilege of being a child of God to every particular occurrence: not entering into a discussion, and setting before their minds—‘What shall I gain—What shall I lose—by taking either step on this occasion? Is it not a greater privilege to be toiling up hill with all my faintness, and reluctance towards God, than to be able to read or pray with the greatest fluency, attended with any diminution of self-loathing, or any—the least—inclination to be satisfied with what I do?’

I am at the end of my paper,

Yours faithfully,
J. T. N.

LETTER XI.

May 14, 1823.

DEAR ———,

I have been so long without writing, and am so desirous not to delay my letter, now I have once begun it,

that I shall only drop a word or two on the most important of all subjects. Your last letter complained of much deadness and reluctance. On this subject it is necessary to distinguish accurately; otherwise we may be discouraged to our very great delay in the ways of the Lord. Distinguish between the consent of the will to the offer of God in the Gospel, and the amount of your activity in the service of God. Here, I think, lies much of the true perception and pursuit of practical religion, and of the maintenance and exercise of faith.

We are often diverted from the principle of the spiritual life, and lose the habitual, earnest application to God to strengthen it, and call it into exercise, by thinking merely,—“What have I left undone, and what have I to do?” Thus, by degrees—without nourishing the life of faith by the repetition of those views of the Redeemer, by which it was, under the Spirit’s power, at first excited—your state becomes unsafe, and, without actual exercise of the principle of life, your walk becomes uncomfortable. Whenever, therefore, you are taking a view of the actual state of your mind, and are discouraged by your practical defects and omissions, go to this point—Do I now, at this moment, solemnly choose God and his Christ, in opposition to every thing that would draw me from him? If there be no drawing back from the terms of the Gospel, it is not necessarily insincerity; but it may be only human weakness, or even constitutional languor, which unfits for practical activity and habitual alertness.

But from whatever cause it arise, its true cure is to look to the present state of the spiritual life: to exert the spiritual senses, and to see the provisions of the covenant, as containing every thing we can wish, and far beyond what we can frame any imagination of.

Thus, you recover an enlivening view of religion, namely—that God designs and aims at nothing else, every moment, but to do you good; and to make you happy, he gives himself and his salvation to you in Christ. Then you get a fresh light thrown upon your path: you lose the impression at every step, that your heavenly Father is watching over you to spy out your faults, and to lay many heavy burdens on you. You begin to feel once more, what a privilege it is to be permitted to do any thing for him, who has done so great things for you. Then your aim and endeavour will be always for his glory. You will do the best you can: you will honour him by believing, that, while you walk in dependence upon him, he will “guide you with his counsel;” and you will find, that “in returning and rest you shall be saved, and in quietness and confidence shall be your strength.”*

At this moment, as it passes, is an interest in Christ your highest wish? Is your reluctance to exertion your grief and burden? Would it be your greatest happiness to be employed for God as the angels are? And while you lament that you can do so little, and the sin which reigns in all you do,—while you pray for the time of increased exertion and cheerful activity, are you yet willing, that the Lord should (while he sees fit) appoint for you as he pleases? This is more important than quantity of exertion. And if you are but doing what you can, it will be wise not to weary yourself and lessen your small stock of activity, by complaining that you can do no more. Look to Jesus, the free pardoner, and Almighty subduer of sin, and claim and entreat his promised help to do all for you.

It is far more profitable to take some time, both

* Is. xxx. 15.

occasionally and steadily, to think on the clear truth and unshaken certainty of the promises: to meditate on the Almighty power, tenderness, faithfulness and sympathy of the Redeemer, instead of thinking merely—"How shall I get through this prayer or that duty:—in other words, how shall I get through the actions of life without life? Listen to him who says—"I will give you rest." * Look at his provisions for completing and securing that rest; and take the gracious word from his own mouth, and say—"Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." † If you "know and believe the love that God hath to you," gratitude will make hard things easy, and bitter things sweet. Especially it will do—what I so often found was blest to me, when I was young and found the ways of God painful to my impatient feelings—it will enable you to *wait*—and though you do not find comfort yet, to be very careful to take no step, no resolution that may encourage or hazard deliberate departure of the heart—the reliance—the expectation from God.

Believe me,
Faithfully yours,
J. T. N.

LETTER XII.

Jan. 21, 1834.

DEAR ———,

Another year of our mortal pilgrimage is ended, and, "if we hold fast the confidence of our rejoicing firm unto the end," we are so much nearer to a blessed eternity.

* Matt. xi. 28.

† Psalm cxvi. 7.

But, as Rutherford observes, we must not think heaven is at next door, and to be reached by very easy exertion. O that I had a thousand tongues to press this point on all my friends, young, and old, and middle-aged! I find this, among other marks of old age, creeping upon me, that I am less willing than formerly to express myself with the earnestness that such subjects call for. I am more cautious than formerly not to say what may discourage, or what may only seem to my over-anxiety to be necessary, and seasonable, when it is not so. And the result is perhaps, that the characteristic feature of my ministerial intercourse at present, as it respects my friends, compared with what it was formerly, is this—that I was then somewhat in danger of being too urgent, and now from a degree of timid caution I am becoming unfaithfully remiss, and silent. I would, if I speak my whole mind, say—‘We are, all of us, too much at our ease, and not sufficiently aware of the necessity of striving to “enter in the strait gate, and taking the kingdom of heaven by violence.”’

I know most of what may be said on those passages of Scripture, which represent our foreappointment to salvation from eternity; and were they not at the foundation of all my hopes, I could have no hope at all. But I know also that, whenever the tenacity of this anchor, and the toughness of this cable, is most realized, there will be the greatest trembling anxiety of love, the most undeviating watchfulness, the most unsparing mortification of “the easily besetting sin,” the most jealous self-suspicion, the most of holy covetousness for the enjoyment of our unseen and future inheritance, and also (without which all our professed “desires to depart, and to be with Christ,” must pass for romance) the covetous habit of appropriating the

company and contemplation of "Him, whom our souls love," and realizing communion with Him in every thing we do. Still would we be stealing a look at him, as, in the course of a long succession of faces in a large company, we rest with peculiar satisfaction on one, in whom we take superior interest. We must be growing more intimate with him, we must become more habitually impressed with the spiritual excellencies and spiritual attractions of the Redeemer, as we advance in the path of life and experience ; or we can have no tangible, distinguishable mark, that we know any thing about Him. Cultivate the sense of daily, hourly wants, and miseries, which He only in all the universe can relieve, and the distinct consciousness that he does relieve them in the most tender, and condescendingly gracious manner, and yet with the triumphant effect of Almighty power and sovereignty. Surely if this does not continually lead us forward to admiring, adoring and inquisitive thoughts into the ways, by which we may know more of His transcendent perfections, and experience more of the influence and transforming power of His love, we must still be very much at uncertainty, whether we are living Christianity or dreaming of it. When I say all this, my dear child, I use you no worse than I use myself. I am continually called to ask this question—whether I have yet begun to live the life of faith, and though I hope I do not this with insincerity or reluctance, yet I find there is a continual necessity for doing it with jealousy and self-distrust. Often look back on former experience, and compare with the time present. Many of the more refined and valuable hints of our early sentiments, frames, habits, the universal spirituality which pervaded our whole thoughts, conversation, and actions ; the godly fear ; the tender care of

offending, the fixed contemplation of, and fear of wandering from Christ—all this withers and vanishes before the glowing influence of something, that we call an increasing understanding of Christian liberty, but which in most instances turns out to be a pretender to that title. May the Lord take up his cause in your heart, and plead it with convincing clearness and powerful, irresistible persuasion!

Your affectionate
J. T. N.

LETTER XIII.

Feb. 24, 1834.

Yes, my dear ——, blessed, blessed thought—“our redemption draweth nigh.” “He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry;”^{*} and it is but “a little while” for faith to hold out. May its blessed “Author and Finisher” continually renew it to us, and to all the beloved constituents of His mystical body! How inexpressibly blessed to be dear to him, as “the apple of His eye!” May he give us some faint resemblance of the same mutual affectionate care for each other, and incessant endeavour to bring Him so habitually before the contemplation of every eye that is enabled to behold Him, that we may “love His appearing,” and “have confidence before Him!” May the Comforter give us the sweet consciousness of His ability in that His office, attach us more and more devotedly to the Redeemer’s work, and engage us more in commu-

^{*} Luke xxi. 26. Heb. x. 36.

nion with Him, and in more intensely breathing—“Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!”* I am persuaded, we only want more habitual dwelling on this thought, to make it as interesting as the expectation of the tenderest father, mother, brother, that ever human being had, and a motive both for diligence in work during the interval, and anticipation of rest at the end.

Dear ——, we beg you to accept our acknowledgment of your heartfelt and watchful remembrance. May we all, as plants of righteousness, grow in grace and in love to the Redeemer, and each other, till transplanted into the very soil of love, rooted and grounded in the Paradise of God!

So prays your affectionate

J. T. N

LETTER XIV.

DURING MRS. N'S ILLNESS.

Oct. 28. 1834.

MY DEAR ——,

It is in vain for me to delineate even an outline of the demands upon my attention since I last wrote, and it would be as useless as vain. Much better it is to turn at once to the view of those blessings, which—though at present we can but indistinctly apprehend, much less realize, them—I would hope the Lord has

* Rev. xxii. 20.

in store as the fruit of this dispensation. When I returned from Ipswich, I hoped she was a little improved in appearance, at least, and in some respects; and I hoped that the removal from the house we then occupied to this, which is just the little residence of elegant simplicity, would favour her recovery, by affording a better air, and opportunity for short and frequent walks in the garden. And perhaps I thought myself in some measure patient and submissive, to be content to wait here some weeks for the re-establishment of her health. But the Lord had greater things in view for us—I should say better; for no doubt so it is, though we cannot call it so in the common language of mortals. But I believe without a shadow of doubt, that God never withholds or removes from His people any thing that contributes to their comfort, but because he “foresees some better thing,” which is to tend more to “fulfil in them the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power.” O that I knew how I might give myself entirely to the direction He intends by this dispensation to impart; and that we might be preserved at as great a distance from the world and present things, as we have appeared at some moments during the trial to have actually reached! At what a discount did many things appear—even the garden here, not because despised, or undervalued, (because I have found it a great resource for me to have a pleasant airy walk within call, where I could get, when the Lord afforded me the heart to pray, opportunity to indulge it,) but because pleasures so much superior have been presented!

Pray let us know how you are; but there is a better thing than all the health in the world, (though none of the Lord's gifts are to be disregarded,) and that is—to be shut out of our own, and into His, will. I

would not close without a word of communication from the fountain-Head. Take that blessed word—"Our Father"—and consider the eternity of that relation—the unchangeableness of it—the grounds of it—the blessed Surety, bondsman and mediator, by whose intervention the relation was established, and must be upheld in spite of all opposition, to all eternity. But I must conclude, though I have not said, I dare say, many things that would occur, if I had time.

I am affectionately yours,

J. T. N.



LETTER XV.

Ipswich, Jan. 26, 1835.

MY DEAR ———,

Though so many days have passed beyond the day, I will congratulate you on the arrival of the 22nd instant. "Not as the world" doth, to wish for many returns of it on earth. I remember, indeed, on the other hand, that, He who has undertaken our happiness says—"I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world; but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."* But I congratulate you, that you and all of us are so much nearer "Jerusalem, our happy home," and that, if we abide in Christ as our life, and persevere in him as our way, neither earth nor hell can prevent our arrival "at the haven where we would be." The word on which we depend would not be the word of God; and there could be no security for the

* John xvii. 15.

eternal condition of those, who were actually arrived in heaven, if one, who sought it in the appointed way, were missing. Let us then "labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him." "Let us gird up the loins of our mind, be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ."* And if, though "we have not seen Him, we yet love Him," let us be engaged in those spiritual exercises, which bring us near to Him; let every conscious movement of the heart be towards that fountain, in which we may at all times wash away the guilt of the past, and towards that treasured fulness of grace, by which we may be provided for all the present, and anticipate provision for all the future. And let contemplation and prayer (never forgetting thanksgiving) be accompanied and followed by active service. Let us, with respect to the present moment, be always able to answer, or labouring to answer the question—"What doest thou here, Elijah †"—and with respect to the future—"Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" ‡ By the way, as I recollect you were interested about ——, you will be pleased to hear, that in great bodily weakness, and equally from infirmity incapacitated for contributing to the accomplishments, or even the studies, of about ten young ladies; she has, by transferring some of their lessons to other hands, secured so much rest for herself, and time with them: that she devotes regular intervals every day to reading the Bible with Henry's notes, and dwelling on it; and that she finds encouragement to proceed, from the experience of the short time that has been employed in the pursuit of this plan. Really it is wonderful to see in the Lord's army how "the lame take the prey." §

* 2 Cor. v. 9. 1 Pet. i. 13.

‡ Acts ix. 6.

† 1 Kings xix. 9.

§ Isai th xxxiii. 23.

And thus those who are tempted to be discouraged, if feebly casting themselves on the Lord, are made in a measure successful contrary to all probability ; while those who seem to have the greatest facilities, and have not so distinctly committed themselves to the Divine guidance, and accepted salvation as lost sinners, have slidden down into helpless and useless oblivion. Now as my gracious Master has sustained me through two pages and a half, and I begin to find I want winding up before I can proceed, it will not become me to linger on for the sake of filling my sheet, as I have no idea that life, motion, being, or grace are measured out by Him, in whom we have all these things, by any such limits as a paper-maker's frame, or a stationer's press.

If you happen to be discussing the grand question which was on the table, (and may the Lord guide your deliberations !) you will not object to my supplying by extract what I want in originality—'Go on, in the strength of the Lord. Put Christ's love to the trial, and put upon it burdens, and then it will appear love indeed. We employ not His love, and therefore we know it not. Let us be faithful, and care for our own part, which is to do, and suffer for Him, and lay Christ's part upon Himself, and leave it there. "Duties are ours, events are the Lord's." I know this does little towards determining the question. But sometimes the words of the wise lead to more than they seem at first to suggest.

Affectionately yours,
J. T. N.

LETTER XVI.

Ipswich, May 5, 1835.

MY DEAR —,

To-day is with me, as yesterday appears to have been with you, a day, in which it pleases the Lord to withdraw sensible consciousness of his presence and power in the soul ; and when our infirmity, (perhaps under the influence and instigation of our spiritual enemy, and as “ his messenger,”) is permitted to “ buffet us.” My natural spirits are low, my hold on my precious Lord seems more that of undeniable inference, and conclusion, than of elevating and animating consciousness.

Well ! what is to be done ? We must go at once to the Fountain-head. I lingered and parleyed for a while, and thought of asking some neighbour to come and drink tea with me. I bless the Lord he did not permit me to do so. “ Who is a rock, save our God ?”* I feel indeed feeble and dispirited. But this illustrates his strength ; and the rest of life to the very end will illustrate more and more of his faithfulness.

Now then let us see how this bears on your case. Have you desired to do the will of the Lord ? And if so, must you not “ prepare for temptations ?” Let us look as an instructive precedent, in the case of Peter “ walking on the water to go to Jesus.” † There was evident desire to acknowledge and honour the Lord. But there was perhaps also an imperfect knowledge of himself, and something of anticipating the Lord’s call. We may see in the sequel of the Lord’s dealings

* Psalm xviii. 31.

† Matt. xiv. 28—31.

with him, how He never lays traps for his people, except it be to bring them nearer to himself. Peter sets out—he begins to sink, and then of course begins at the same time to find, that his faith was not quite as strong as he thought it. This is ground for humiliation, but none for despondency. What did it turn out to be? why just as much a proof of the favour and loving-kindness of Christ to Peter, as if he had enabled him to walk the whole way, the water not rising above the soles of his feet. But He intended to do more for him, to make him taste largely of His pity, power, and grace; to let him feel, that he had set out with something too much of self-confidence, but that, as He had “bid him come to Him”—(and this may surely be concluded to be the case, whenever there is a prevailing desire to do the Lord’s will, though there may be some unallowed mixture or defect, which needs to be detected, that the desire may be successful :)—He would effectually accomplish His bidding, notwithstanding all the impediments, which Peter’s infirmity put in the way. O that blessed word—“I will bring the blind by a way that they know not, &c.” *

It is perhaps impossible to taste the deeper refreshments of the Lord’s consolations, without some correspondingly deep acquaintance with the pains and distresses, which call for these consolations—“As the sufferings of Christ abound in us,”—those which we encounter in His ways, in the endeavour to do His will—“so our consolations also abound by Christ.” † If you are led to cry to Him under a deeper sense of your own helplessness; though I trust He is drawing all, and supporting all, yet His method—His humbling,

* Isaiah xlii. 16.

† 2 Cor. i. 5.

trying method—with you, is surely no ground to have less confidence in His favour, or to look forward to less distinct manifestations of His support and acceptance, only in His own time and way. I hope I do not speak unfelt truth ;—if you had known the keen taste, which the bereavement of creature-comfort gave me of these words of the hymn ;

“ Other refuge have I none ;—
Hangs my helpless soul on thee.”

you would enter with more of appropriation into that text, in your own present circumstances—“ Ye now therefore have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.” * My love is with you all, and my heart’s desire and prayer to God for you all—“ Yet a little while, and He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry.” Now the just shall live by faith—“ and we are not of them that draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.” †

Your affectionate,

J. T. N.

LETTER XVII.

AFTER MRS. N’S. DEATH.

Ipswich, May 19, 1835.

Indeed my dear ——, the Bishop of Ohio is “ quite winning.” And when I read his address this morning in the *Record*, I was for a moment filled with the

John xvi. 22.

† Heb. x. 37—39.

thought of leaving a country, where the sterility of the soil scarcely supports the vegetation of the Gospel seed, to help break up the fallow-ground of America, and lay my head at last upon the same continent with the Eliots and the Mathers and the Brainerds of elder times. But even if my constitution were more fitted for such a change than it is, I should be against stirring from the spot, on which my duties lie, and where the chastening, that both points them out more clearly, and will, I hope, eventually separate me for them more exclusively, and give me to them more resolutely—has been in wisdom, love, and mercy inflicted upon me.

I am a slow and dull scholar even now. But I trust my teacher will not leave me to suffer these things in vain. I think I see what should be my aim in 1 Tim. v. 5. Every sense, that each passing hour brings with it, of my destitution of human comfort, should lead me with fresh interest and desire to the uncreated source of all comfort, and the object of all dependence; and engage me in communion with Him through the busiest hours of the day, and the silent watches of the night. In this way I might have a Heaven upon earth, and have nothing to do, while I stay, but to devote myself to His glory, and to “the elect of God, that they may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.”*

And must not this in fact be the case with us all? Is there any thing less than virtual or actual separation from the creature, that can furnish or rather strip us for the work of God? Not that I suppose this necessary, except we make it so. “If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.” † And if I had

* 2 Tim. ii. 10.

† 1 Cor. xi. 31.

been willing to be led, I should not have needed to be driven ; and then what an adorable economy of Divine management is here, that chastens one child, and calls another home by the same dispensation ! I have intended to write to you several times. But while I was at Cambridge several things prevented me, and I returned only on Saturday evening, after, I hope, a spiritual, and as far as can be on earth, a heavenly week. My dear old friend's company at King's College, was quite refreshing. I preached at his church on Thursday evening, and was I think, more straitened than I have been perhaps any three times in the last three years. It was not very pleasant before so many gownsmen, or indeed before any who usually hear Mr. Simeon. But I can truly say, I was distinctly and decidedly thankful for it afterwards. I was enabled to put myself during the prayers into the Lord's hands, to have no choice but His ; and He just so ordered it, that I went on every step trembling, and as if it would be the last, and yet neither in tone, or pronounciation, or by any gross blunder, did I betray myself to my hearers ; by nothing in short, but by that mediocrity, which just excites no remark at all. How delightful when one is a little cool after such a process, is the thought of having given up one's will to His ! We know this pleasure in the case of an earthly friend. Where or what are our hearts, that we fail to experience or to appreciate it in the only case that has an indisputable claim ? Just when I had finished this, I cast my eye on your note, where you say—' Yet this can be changed in a moment ; and if not, I can be made to feel as satisfied as if it were.' Yes, my dear —, believe me, when I tell you, that there is no pleasure like giving yourself up promptly, instantly to the Lord. Only compare the gratification

with any thing earthly you ever experienced. But 'it is trying to feel, that such is expected and looked for from all around, &c.' It is trying; but it is an experiment, by which vessels are formed "meet for their master's use." Who have the best opportunity and advantage for spiritual growth and establishment? They, whose feelings are influenced by the conjoint operation of God and the creature; or those who are looking only to Him, that "seeth in secret, and will reward openly." If the Lord has enabled us to separate ourselves in some measure from all that is in the world, for His service, do not let us be satisfied with a second-best sort of Christianity; or a mere corner in His loving-kindness. But let us improve every situation, in which He places us, and every feeling, which those situations excite in our minds, to rise higher and higher towards Him, and turn, as the heliotrope, to the rising "Sun of Righteousness, with healing in His beams." Let us then look indeed for the time of His meridian brightness, and our consummate happiness; but let us not be unmindful of the approaches, that may be made towards a more habitual and heavenly communion with Him *here*. Every conscious moment of distance from Him is not only a loss of a practical act of godliness, but it is an acquiescence in a lower state, than need be, of the principle of existence and enjoyment.

Your affectionate,

J. T. N.

LETTER XVIII.

May 25, 1835.

MY DEAR ——,

I think your movements of late, from the distracting effect of the subjects, which have been pressing upon your mind, must have been something like the excursion of the saint, who set off to walk a mile or two without his head. I hope therefore, you may find that the remark, which has been made in his case, is truly and importantly applicable to yours—"Ce'st le premier pas qui coute."* Not that I mean to suggest, that the difficulties of our Christian race will ever materially diminish; but I think that in proportion as we resolutely follow on the steps of our dear Master, we shall find that, while He brings us into many "a snare, and lays trouble upon us," which our most liberal previous calculations had not anticipated, he at the same time infuses strength of faith, and maintains a frame of composure, and reliance, which none but those, who are brought by experience to know the want of it, ever are blessed with. Particularly I believe it to be His usual method to make those who are setting out, like Peter, on any peculiarly arduous undertaking, feel their weakness and helplessness at first starting, and sink, and cry to Him for help, and feel that He only can, and does help them. May I not say that you have already had experience, both of the desolation and restoration in a way of home-felt impression, and conscious reality, to which much of what we feel under sermons, or in

* "It is the first step that costs."

reading, or even in many instances of animated prayer scarcely deserves to be compared? Rich and various are the fruits, that arise to the man, who, under the Lord's trying dispensations, like Aaron,* "holds his peace." First—It is not very dutiful or affectionate to Him—who "spared not his own Son," or to Him who "loved not his life unto the death," yea, who Himself "learned obedience by the things that He suffered,"—to go and circuitously ask His creatures, whether they think He has done with us quite as wisely, and as lovingly as He might, and should have done. Neither secondly, does it seem likely, that our confidence, our unreserve, or our capability of the consolation that cometh from God only, will be increased by such a step the next time we go to the throne of grace; or the next time that some new difficulty sends us crying to lay hold of His hand. And then thirdly, It is not only a bad state of feeling to be in, and a very hard, as well as a very devouring employment of time; but it keeps out good feelings,—feelings of thankful enjoyment, and that occupation of time, which might proceed in the uninterrupted pursuit of "building ourselves up in our most holy faith" from the materials, which every moment's outward occurrence, and inward experience would supply. Only take a few particulars which apply to the case, and discuss them—'Does the Lord know, whether He has given me the desire to do His will, or not? Does He know whether He had given me to trust in Himself *absolutely* to accomplish that desire, or not? Then does He place me under a succession of dispensations, which, like an ill-provided, ill-appointed expedition, teem with imperfections, and may

* Lev. x. 3.

by any—the remotest—possibility, fail of their intended effect? Nay, is any one partial arrangement in the whole scheme—notwithstanding all the visible, superficial perplexities—an iota less than perfect? Then let us *individually* say on all occasions—“This is my infirmity, but I will remember, &c. Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him, which is the health of my countenance, and my God.”* And in our Christian communications let us justify, adore, and praise that love, which looks through even the Church triumphant, and the songs and harps of angels, to hear our feeble cry, and supply our every want. “Let the praises of God be in our mouths,” for all that experience has known, and the incomparably more that faith believes, and we shall find this accompanied with “a two-edged sword in our hands,”† to put to flight every enemy, and cut our way through every difficulty.

There is no time to complain. He will be here, and shall we let Him find us complaining? Does he say—“Blessed are the servants, whom their Lord when he cometh shall find so doing?” I trow not. Let us (and may His grace make the desire effectual!) keep our eyes on Him, “that we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.” Shall we get nothing by the trials, in which He has placed us? “Suffer all in vain!” Still engage in our Lord’s work with a *not quite* determined resolution, and venture enough to be strong with surrounding difficulties, while we venture not enough to pluck and secure the blossom of His favour—the smile that forebodes—“Well done, good and faithful servant!”‡

I have just received a note from —, respecting the illness of her children, so christianly mindful of

* Ps. lxxvii. 10; xliii. 5.

† Ib. cxlix. 6.

‡ Matt. xxv. 21.

a scrap which I wrote to her, so thankful for a small degree of amendment in the child—and so mildly resigning him, and all of them into the Lord's hands, that altogether it impressed—"Behold the handmaid of the Lord!" O Lord, let my portion be with thy people, and "gather not my soul with sinners." The sorrows of the Lord's children are sweeter than all the most refined pleasures of unsanctified hearts. I would rather go bowed down under my burden with the believing persuasion, that the Lord had inflicted it for His glory, and would remove it, when it should be consistent with His designs for promoting that glory, and my salvation in His dear Son—than I would experience the greatest accumulations of other satisfactions without it, than I ever knew or imagined. I feel, I trust, more of that of Romaine—"Come nearer to me, soul, nearer still,—I will place you in such circumstances, that you shall not be able to do a moment without me."

Your affectionate,
J. T. N.

LETTER XIX.

Ipswich, June 11, 1835.

MY DEAR _____,

I hope I sometimes feel a kind of commencement of the sensation you allude to, anticipating the possession of another and a better country. Already I hope I feel something of it, when walking through my little territory, where every spot, every twig almost,

if dwelt upon, is calculated to awaken some painfully-tender reflection ; and I see nothing, touch nothing but the recollection of the race of immortality, or the work of this life in reference to it. It is very well, that others cannot in general enter into our case. Prone as we are to lean on broken reeds, that go into our hands, and pierce them, we should experience this much oftener, if we did not in many instances detect at once a want of sympathy, which says—‘Expect nothing here.’ Lord, that I may learn to come again and again to the truest of all sympathy, which is the object of that cry—“Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.”* Well, I shall say good-bye for the present.

Affectionately yours,
J. T. N.

Does not a great part of our unhappiness in life proceed from the perpetual expectation of it by means of a change of circumstances, which never can be so considerable—no not in our spiritual attainments—as to be worth calculation? Why not say, ‘I am at this moment as happy in the possession of the hope of the gospel, as ever I can be as long as I live?’ All the rest is but the drop of the bucket ; and all I can hope of the improvement is exclusively to be found in having that hope made clearer, and Jesus, the object of it, dearer to me.

* Mark x. 47.

LETTER XX.

Ipswich, June 23, 1835.

MY DEAR —,

The verse for the day is—"Let us break their bands, (even the bands of Jehovah, and his anointed) asunder; and cast away their cords from us."* O! how continuedly have I been doing this; sometimes openly, daringly—the will as it were, impiously clenching its rebellious fists against the Lord. And as I did strive against the constraints of Jehovah's dominion, so did I slight and spurn the cords of His loving-kindness, with which Messiah sought to draw me to Himself. And what am I now? 'Woo'd and chastis'd, a flagrant rebel still.' Oh, that He would enforce the gentle but effectual restraint of the influence of His Spirit, and "bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ!" I would have this entire and universal. It is not only a folly and a falsehood to "profess to know," trust, and love Christ, if "in works I deny Him." But to this source, mediately, or immediately, I trace every pain, which I have inflicted on myself, or my friends. Had I listened at every moment to the voice of the Saviour, even in the poor way that I have at some moments; and much more, if I had been in any moderately improving progress in this respect, I should have been free from every pang of remorse, that now tears my heart. I would now testify unto you, that, if I may by the Divine grace prevail, you may not come into the torment into which I have brought myself, trifling with

* Psalm ii. 3.

the restraints in however small and apparently unimportant instances and degrees, which the Lord laid upon conscience ; and by not obeying the silken reins of the love of Christ, by which He “instructed and taught me in the way in which I should go.” These restraints and influences are like the tendons and ligaments of the human body. They are a confinement indeed ; but by that confinement all the motion is performed, and the comfort secured. And as in one case, the least strain weakens exertion, and produces pain in every posture, and at every step ; so it is with every irregular movement we make, and every strain we inflict upon the sinews and ligaments of the new creation. The renewed judgment and conscience, under the plastic power of the Holy Spirit in conversion, are to guide every thought, word, and action, of the new creature. And how does this neglect of keeping these in good order, and our careless straining and injuring them, make our inward frame and outward walk, a series of almost uninterrupted suffering ! I pass with many, I believe, not only of my partial friends, but even with some others also, for a needlessly scrupulous, a more than cautious person. And I do not altogether wonder, that, on a partial or a hasty survey, this should be the impression made. But the fact is, that, after having “made my escape from the stormy wind and tempest” of the world, in a degree not perhaps often vouchsafed ; and having by Divine grace drilled and trained myself to considerable habits of self-denial, yet I am so far from having permitted “patience to have its perfect work” in this respect ; and so much inaction still remains in the habitual movements of my mind and life, that conscience is by these apparent trifles perpetually wounded, and the comfort

of my friends, as well as my own, sacrificed, before I have even considered, that it has been endangered.

Yours affectionately,

J. T. N.

LETTER XXI.

Ipswich, Sept. 21, 1835.

MY DEAR ———,

“ How unsearchable are the Lord’s judgments, and his ways past finding out ! ” * One thing I think I see clearly ; that however corrosive, and though it go within an inch of the life of the spiritual patient ; yet if the remedy be necessary, He will not withhold it. In looking back at a former collection of reflection and supplication, I see that I again and again said— ‘ Lord, do what thou wilt with me. Take any method to relieve me from my chains, and to bring me nearer to Thee.’ As I trust that a prayer for deliverance from spiritual distress and bondage must be the prompting of the Holy Spirit, I can have no reason to doubt, that the Lord has been wounding, in order to heal ; and to embitter earth, that I may know that it is not my rest, and may be habitually longing, and reaching after my heavenly treasure. And although the effect of the dispensation in this way is hardly perceptible, and I sometimes scarcely see my celestial home through the mists of sorrow and infirmity that hover around the path of my earthly pilgrimage ; yet I think it even absurd not to cherish the hope, that this will be the

* Rom. xi. 33.

case. Nay, I cannot but think, that the rudiments and elements of such a change are already in some feeble degree of operation. The Lord help such a poor creature to hold on, and to hold out, to the end! What an encouragement to a miserable worm, engaged in asking the Lord's salvation, is it to know; that if "His strength is made perfect in weakness," and the sufficiency of His grace manifested by the deficiencies and wretchedness of the subjects of it, then the more miserable, vile, lost, the more loudly and triumphantly will the arches of heaven echo the song of grateful redeemed sinners, and the harps and voices of applauding, adoring angels.

Your affectionate
J. T. N.

LETTER XXII.

Ipswich, October 3, 1836.

MY DEAR ———,

Your letter I know not how sufficiently to thank the Lord for. 'I long for nothing upon earth, however pleasant it might be. But I long for conformity to my Saviour's image.' Well, dear ———, it is worth while to go a long way for such an attainment, or the prevailing desire after it. I hope I can tell you, that through grace I am desiring the same thing; though alas! I seem to fight against the fulfilment of my own desires. But I have prayed for years, that the Lord would take His *own method* to bring me nearer and nearer to Himself. I trust He took me at my word, and is going on to accomplish that desire, though it seems as if I must

be ground to the impalpability of potter's clay, before it can be effected. 'But oh! dear Lord, go on for thy glory, the good of the church, and the salvation of this astonishing rebel.' And I hope that something, which may tend eventually for some increase of service, if life be spared, is already effected. I seem so far changed, that I sit in my study, and feel as little of my domestic feeling (I, to whom domestic relation was the only medium, through which I could see, feel, or taste any thing) as if I were a soldier, an Arab, a Missionary. This may afford great liberty for service, if the Lord should give me strength, and favour me with devoting my grey hairs more entirely to His service. And I do not feel ordinarily sullen or disposed to complain; sometimes indeed, there is a little of the grim composure of the Spartan youth, while the fox was gnawing his vitals; but I hope the prevailing tendency is to the frame of a weaned, but submissive, satisfied child, accepting and waiting my Father's will. The Lord himself bless you!

Your affectionate

J. T. N.

LETTER XXIII.

Ipswich, July 14, 1837.

MY DEAR ———,

You allude to dear, dear Simeon's departure. I was too ill to venture over, till he wrote word, he could no longer sustain the interview. These removals leave earth such a poor place, that no view of it is tolerable, but that which is associated with the prospect of

Heaven. With respect to this sentiment, endeavour to recal continually the state of mind till your marriage, when you had nothing to lean on, no one to flee to but God; when—“*Jesus Christ vit*”*—was the only plank to cling to. You may depend upon it, the enemy of souls will make it his one object, to employ every comfort of domestic life to draw you from that nearness to a throne of grace, and “the evidence of things not seen, and the substance of things hoped for,” and to chain you down to earth, and drive the heavenly Canaan into a dim, unheeded corner of your mind. He cannot succeed, if you, on the one hand, “remember the wormwood and the gall,” and how profitable they were in bringing you to God by Christ, with all the self-renunciation of real aching distress: and if, on the other, you “hold fast the confidence of rejoicing,” to which these distresses draw you, and which, but for the suffering of them, you would perhaps never have seen so clearly, or laid hold of with such determination. If this experience be recalled, and the views of the Redeemer, which you had then, habitually realized, all the circumstances of your new relation, which I look at with so much satisfaction, will be means of enlarged comfort and usefulness.

While I think of it, let me recommend you to study the messages to the Seven Churches in Asia, Rev. ii. iii. They contain perhaps more full, varied, and extensive spiritual materials for a believer's experience, than almost any passage in Scripture of equal extent. I have room but for a few lines more. O Lord! in thy unspeakable mercy, “by thine agony and bloody sweat,” in consideration of that “cross and passion,” take any method to bring us more entirely, and keep us more incessantly, and all who are dear to us, under

* *Jesus Christ lives.*

the “constraining influence of the love of Christ, that we may not live to ourselves, but to Him who died for us, and rose again.”

Your affectionate,
J. T. N.

LETTER XXIV.

Sept. 4, 1837.

Yes, dear ——, it is even so. The pleasing dream is over, and I have great reason to bless the Lord, who enabled me to enjoy the pleasure of your visit far beyond what my infirmities would previously have permitted me to expect. But it will not be for the benefit or enjoyment of any of us to be permitted to think, that life is otherwise than a dream. For if, with all our deep impressions of the vanity and polluting power of the world around us, and our own deceitfulness within, we yet feel too much inclined to make it our rest; what a condition should we be in, if our gracious Redeemer and Guardian did not, from day to day, and (if our eyes and ears were open) from minute to minute, send us some intimation, that we may as well attempt to walk on the water to India, as to find a moral rest for our feet on the waves of this troublesome world! Blessed above all expression of blessedness be His name, whose faithful love will not suffer us to “destroy ourselves,” but shews us that, while we are continually aiming at this, “our help is in Him!” * And, does he not also make us feel, in the emptiness and insufficiency of the things, which would

* Hosea xiii. 9.

detain us from Him, that we cannot do a moment without that help? Can we enjoy the world or any thing in it, or the society of our dearest friends, without Him? Must He not stand by, and cut every morsel of our mental food, and put it into our mouths, as you do for your child? or can we, in a single instance, help ourselves without Him? Well! to come to a practical conclusion from this vagrant reflection—I can now confidently commit you again to His care, at a season when that care is especially necessary, and when both faith and experience warrant the persuasion, that it will be faithfully and effectually exerted.

Your affectionate,
J. T. N

LETTER XXV.

Ipswich, Oct. 7, 1837.

Well my dear ——, I believe you do not estimate me as a very accomplished Stoic, and you may therefore perhaps, pay the more attention to what I am about to suggest on the subject of recollections of that sort. It never was intended that we should extirpate natural feelings—not in themselves wrong. But guard against their encroachments. From a naturally pensive and attachable disposition, and from having keenly enjoyed the relations of life, which give scope for the exercise of that disposition, my imagination so clings to the past, that from solitude and a feeble state of brain, ill adapted to persevering study, the world is become a sort of church-yard, and the objects around, animate or inanimate, are changed into memorial

tablets of the departed. So while I exhort you ever to cultivate a tenderness, which is one of the most gratifying features of the human mind, directed by the Divine Being; guard against a habit of pensive thought, give yourself with all your might to the present close, powerful interests of that Christian domestic happiness, with which it has pleased our gracious Lord in so remarkable a manner to bless you. You know, I dare say, that I do not wish to be forgotten by my friends. But I find that what we call sentiment requires to be watched, for it is a sad thief of time, mental energy, tranquillity and usefulness.

Your affectionate,

J. T. N.

LETTER XXVI.

Ipswich, Sept. 9, 1839.

Well! dear ——, nothing can be more level to the simplest reflection, and the humblest capacity, (if we are but honest with ourselves), than the association of our gracious, Heavenly Father's presence, His promise and blessing, with every object and occurrence. It is necessary to give them their respective powers of exciting the idea of comfort. And if I were more employed in endeavouring to point this out to my friends, I should probably be in possession of considerably more of it myself. I am content with a general indistinct dreaming apprehension of whatever comes before my mind; and nothing is more unfavourable to the discovery of the mercy, power, and wisdom of God in any thing. It is as clear a truth as any

that can be brought to the mind, that every object, and event, has some token of the goodness of God, and is capable of being the subject of grateful and humble acknowledgment. But though it requires neither ingenuity nor refinement to discover this (unless in peculiar cases,) it does require attention, and some exertion of mind. The average character of hourly transactions is not such, as to present their claim to our gratitude on their *surface*. Indeed it is obvious, that the character of many events and sensations, and of many circumstances, both personal and relative, is quite of an opposite description. But a diligent study of the specimens of the Divine dealings, with a realizing of His hand and a determined believing contemplation of His love, so far as we can trace it in particulars (always holding fast the certainty of its presence and agency, even where we cannot *specify it*) would bring us to a growing acquaintance with what we may call the natural history of spiritual things. The study of almost any thing is very different from the mere acquaintance with the principles of it, or with the frequent presentment of the illustrative specimens of its nature and character. You might perhaps, by having attended, or superintended any little group of young people learning to draw, have acquired nearly all the knowledge you have of drawing; I mean so far as merely having it in the mind. You might have been able to communicate the knowledge to others, who might from your instruction have become practically ready at it. You might have been able to defend your opinion upon any controverted question connected with the art; but the knowledge arising from *one drawing executed*, creates an interest, and a familiarity, that is worth much more. So in botany, geology, but—above all—in prayer, and in

everything connected with the life of God in the soul of man. Every actual experimental exertion—every exercise of faith in laying hold on the Divine promises and engagements—does make the truth of those promises stand forth with a prominence to the eye of faith, and afford a hold for the hand of faith to grasp, which no mere contemplation can do. And when this is not only distinctly meditated upon, and the Lord seen and acknowledged in it, but pleaded in prayer, we have this delineation of it in the mind, and the review of our delineation, which creates usually a vivid and durable impression. Were this repeated, (Mr. Newton I think, used every night to review the principal mercies of his life,) what a gallery of paintings should we have, (the Holy Spirit assisting in every genuine act of faith,) of the Divine dealings, affectingly expressive of Redeeming love! May the Lord enclose you in the arms of His love, mercy, and protection; and may you, surrendering yourself and all you are and have, to His covenant care, be enabled by faith to say—“Thou art my hiding-place. thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance!”*

May you be occupied with considering His dealings, comforted with putting yourself continually afresh into His hands, and habitually engaged in prayer, that the *present*, and all events and periods of your life may be sanctified, to bring you into increasing conformity to the image of the Redeemer! Converse with God in your retirement. The precious interval will soon be over, and you must mix with the world again.

Your affectionate,

J. T. N.

* Psalm xxxii. 7.

LETTER XXVII.

ON PRAYER.

Ipswich, Sept. 27, 1839.

MY DEAR ———,

When Christian friends are separated, and cannot in the smallest degree contribute to each other's comfort personally; how reviving the thought, and how blessed the privilege, that they can commend each other to infinite love, and rejoice that both are cared for and preserved by infinite wisdom, and protected by Almighty power!

What great things prayer will do! Yes; but who makes the experiment? Who prays indeed! Who feels interested in what he prays for? If our hearts be sometimes warmed, the fervour and the interest is so long suspended; the interval is so protracted, before the same subject is again brought before the throne of grace, except in ejaculation; that, if we were to judge of the desire felt by such application or petition on any other subject, we should estimate it at a very low rate. We want to make prayer *a business*; and if we had anything like a correct impression of its importance—how it is the hinge on which every thing else turns, we should both arrange the seasons of it, and engage in the act, as the most important business of our lives. This we should do as to the act of it. And as to the spirit, it would be the frame, in which we should undertake everything throughout the day. It would be to us, like professional knowledge, and professional skill to the artist, or in the learned

faculties. We should seek to have a distinct, connected, and comprehensive view of the subject generally, and of all that it includes, all that it applies to.

Again, we should esteem it *our privilege*. How very seldom is this realized! Is it in fact realized at any time, when we conclude prayer without regret that it is ended? No! If we might so make application, with such certainty of success if we persevered, in anything that respects our worldly interests, and the gratification of the affections, in the temporal happiness of those who are dear to us; should we ever leave off with that absence of all desire to continue, which we feel, mostly, in concluding prayer?

But again, we want to know more of it as a *pleasure*. And here, as in each of the two former particulars, we need acquaintance with the infinitely gracious character of our Heavenly Father, and our adorable "Advocate with the Father." We never dwell long enough upon the features of the mind and heart of the Divine Parent, His love, and the proofs of His love, to feel the attractive influence drawing us to Him, and making us unwilling to depart. O look at the certainty of that love, as one undoubted Scripture testimony after another shews, as clear as noon-day, and delineates its infinitely varied features with all the splendour and gratification, with which the sun displays the beauties of creation. Dwell on the manifestation; and it will win the heart to stay, and this will lead to habitual "abiding and walking with Him." So only shall we be secured against the continual, inveterate turning of the mind after those things which engage it, in the race of weariness and the pursuit of emptiness.

O analyse that blessed expression taught by the Beloved to His brethren—"Our Father." Learn a

little more of it every day—Dearest love to you all.
Adieu.

Your affectionate,
J. T. N.

LETTER XXVIII.

Ipswich, April 27, 1840.

DEAR ———.

I must not undervalue the source from whence I derive every thing ; though I cannot think too meanly of the instrument. In all this weakness of frame and poverty of mind, my Almighty friend may enable me to drop a thought, for which you or I, under His blessing, may, as one link in the chain, be the better to all eternity. Now when I am very prostrate and very barren of thought, I sometimes find one of the simple elementary truths very precious. For example—what a support it is to know, that one thing is fixed and certain to every believer beyond the possibility of doubt ! namely, that, if, amidst all that sometimes tortures the feelings, and perplexes the understanding almost to distraction, it were proposed to him to make the smallest change in the dealings of the Lord's providence, to suit his own present wishes, or relieve his sufferings—he would not venture on his own responsibility to make the alteration of a hair's breadth. He would refer the choice wholly to the Lord ; only entreating, that he might be supported under it. This does not infringe the lawfulness of desiring relief in the Lord's time and way. But as to a view of our own real interest, it is not only pious submission, but

enlightened self-love, which would lead to this determination. If we would have the best for ourselves that can be, it must be accomplished by giving a *carte blanche* to infinite wisdom and love.

But I must now scramble, for the letter must be off this evening, and I have a party, with two servants and four children coming to me. However, dear —— will be here to help me ; and, as I love them all, I hope, under the blessing of Infinite Love, who delights to see His people happy, we shall not be at a loss to be comfortable. Yesterday I took my first excursion for a day's missionary work at Colchester. I endeavoured to set before them the rising kingdom of Messiah ; and to exhort them to acknowledge it in its depressed and infant state, and to manifest their dependence on the worth and certainty of those promises, which are at an almost inexpressible discount with the world, and which some Christians hardly appear to act upon the faith of.

I was with a young woman this afternoon who is far advanced in consumption, and in a very pleasing state of mind. I found her quite delighted by the calls of a neighbour's wife, once in very good circumstances. Now the husband has been laid by. They are overwhelmed with debt ; the landlord threatens a distress for rent ; and there are ten children. The young woman —— says, it is quite delightful to hear the expressions of unaffected trust in the Lord and desire of spiritual instruction, which this woman has manifested under these circumstances. I sometimes compare my limited exertions in the ministry to a child's little garden taken out of the great one. It is very small, but very important to the cultivator. And in this way the Lord seems to indulge and employ me. And now I hope to-day He has given me another flower

for my little garden. May it be a sprig of heart's-ease, and bloom abundantly to the honour of the Lord and of His Christ !

Your affectionate

J. T. N.

LETTER XXIX.

Ipswich, July 28, 1840.

MY DEAR ———,

What an unspeakable blessing is any, the smallest, improvement in the power of distinct thought ! What a different thing the whole privilege of conscious intelligent existence is, when we can take a clear apprehensive grasp of such a short, but full, statement—“ We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens ” *—from what the same consciousness is, when the power of thought is so unexcitable, that it seems impossible to direct it to any object whatever ; or when it is so vagrant and uncontrollable, that, however vividly it may discern any other object, or however ardently it may pursue it, it seems impossible to employ it on any thing pleasing or valuable. But when favoured with a little calmness, and a little clearness, how delightful to take up such a proposition as that I have alluded to, which the Holy Ghost hath committed to writing by the hand of His servant Paul, and preserved for nearly eighteen centuries and a half in the Church, as

* 2 Cor. v. 1.

an expression for the faith of His people to avow itself in all ages. How interesting and how encouraging to examine it, and to discover that, as the soul, in humble dependence on the all-sufficiency of the Redeemer, and the teaching of the Spirit, approaches nearer to the statement ; surveys it more closely, treats it more simply and distinctly, the more true it appears. If I do not wholly reject revelation ; if I really admit it (meaning what I say, and attending to what I mean) to be the word of God, and that word His testimony concerning the certainty of salvation by faith in Christ ; then what can be surer than the reality of this future blessedness, or the incalculably infinite value of it ? Or can either be more sure than my interest in it and title to it, provided I receive the testimony which God has given of His Son ?

What are the grounds of hesitation ? Are they any thing of this sort ? ‘ If I get hold on this hope with some firmness and distinctness in my morning retirement, I cannot keep hold of it during the day. Or if I am favoured with occasional seasons, in which I can realize this confidence, I cannot get it habitually. The conscious departure from the Lord, in the course of the day, will not let me exercise it. And I must wait till the evening, when I may have time and liberty to recal my scattered thoughts, and recollect the grounds of faith, and once more build myself up in them.’ My dear immortal ! is this reconcileable with Divine truth ? or, if honestly examined, with common sense ? ‘ I am so circumstanced, that I must suspend all practical influence of Gospel principles the greater part of every day, I must live for that interval as without God in the world, an impenitent unbeliever, adding sin to sin, and insensibility to insensibility, till I have leisure to settle the account,

and seek the precious blood that obliterates it all.' I do not say that we come quite distinctly to this; but do we not greatly hazard it? And is not the question—"When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith in the earth?"* painfully applicable to our daily frames and habits? I mention this, because it appears to me, that not only is the disease awful, but the implied cure that is looked for, is, if trusted home, such as designates the disease absolutely fatal and incurable. For what is the practical language of indulging this evil in any degree? 'I must wait, till age renders me less sensible to the interruptions of the world, or circumstances leave me more unencumbered.' I can tell you from my own experience, though much favoured, in many respects, in both these views, that such a time will never come. No, nor is it to be expected, that God will grant you grace for this purpose, unless you are both diligently and fervently seeking it by prayer; not waiting till you feel yourself in possession of what you ask and desire; but, like the palsied man, actually putting forth the withered limb in confident expectation that strength will be given by the Lord, when we gird and exert ourselves, though absolutely without any strength of our own. Faith must be aimed at as faith, as it is the proof of the reality of invisibles, the testimony to their value, and the evidence of our right and title to them. To wait for this title till we are better, (and there is, I am afraid, as much of this fault attributable to believers, who do not live in the enjoyment of faith, as in the formalists, who live without the reality of it) is something like waiting to settle our belief of any earthly thing, not by the exercise of a sound judgment upon the credibi-

* Luke xviii. 8.

lity of the witnesses of it, but for our being in better health or more easy circumstances. It must be done by reading Scripture, meditation on it, and prayer, with express reference to our acceptance of the promise of "God who cannot lie." To do otherwise is to countenance the idea, that perfection of piety, and communion with God, is to be found, not in availing ourselves of the events of Divine providence in domestic and social life, as they affect us relatively and individually; but in abstraction from them. I conceive that verse in the hymn to be strictly and literally true—

"Where'er they seek thee, thou art found;
And every place is hallowed ground."

I believe it to be very much now, as it was when our Lord was upon earth. He receives them who go to Him. He walks with them in the busied scenes, as well as visits them in their retirement. He receives them most to His confidence who most seek it, as Peter and John and the family at Bethany. I presume they were in all cases perfect specimens of piety in the most accurate and critical sense. But they approached Him, associated with Him with hearty openness and simplicity, and laid open their wants and feelings to Him; and one great mark of His familiarity and love was, that He faithfully reprov'd them. May we thus associate with Him, as well as pray to Him, and "be always confident, walking by faith, and not by sight," telling Him, not only the sins of the past day, at a certain time, by the enumeration of memory; but from conscious impression at the moment as it flies, pour out the sense of our rebellion, treachery, baseness, cowardice, duplicity, &c., and receive the application of His blood, the assurance of

His forgiveness, and the persuasion of His restoring renewing grace !

May the Lord enfold us all in the arms of His sovereign, infinite and unchangeable love !

Yours affectionately,

J. T. N.

LETTER XXX.

Ipswich, October 27, 1840.

MY DEAR ———,

I have just been casting my eye over the correspondence of one of the Lord's dear and eminently useful servants of the last century. It is both humbling and encouraging to me. 'My dear friend'—he says,—'I need not tell you that I have you always on my heart. At this time I am praying for you, that you may be kept very hungry, and very thirsty after Christ, among those whom He pronounces blessed, and whom He will make blessed. It is a sign of health to have a good appetite. There is no better evidence of our having "tasted that the Lord is gracious," than still to be waiting on Him for the bread of life.' This has led me (though my mind—the prey of a thousand painful and distressing thoughts—is too unapt to pray of itself) to pray for you, that you may be kept 'very hungry and very thirsty for Christ.' And I hope your letter tells me, that this is likely to be the case. Your husband and your children are well enough to make your heart flow out in gratitude to Him, who purchased these blessings for you by His bitter agony in the garden, and torment on the accursed cross, who obtains

them day by day, and moment by moment too through His intercession ; and, as the Lord of Providence, bestows them moment by moment too, with His own precious hands, accompanied with His presence and His smile. And if we always associated Him with His gifts, always telling Him what we want, confiding in His wisdom, care, and love, and getting all sanctified and insured by His regulating, endearing, securing blessing. He would moreover “do such and such things for us.” Oh we might indeed have summer all the year, and youth all our days, if we would. But because we do not live close to, and live upon, the Fountain of living waters, therefore we have a crook in the lot. ‘My husband is delicate ; my boy is sometimes very good, but sometimes very naughty ; and my soul, probably very like every thing else I am interested about and concerned in, sometimes good, and sometimes naughty.’ What a blessing it is, that when the tender love of our Saviour, and the atmosphere he breathes around us, cannot keep us close to him, not even from the sense of its connection with our own comfort—that He intermixes chastening. The fruit of this dispensation is to make us go to Him continually, hungering and thirsting, as the different particulars of our experience, or our circumstances, make us feel our want of Him, to make us go and feed heartily by faith, and “taste that He is gracious.” We really want nothing, nay can have nothing, more or better, than when we actually put every thing, just as it is, into His hands, and leave all to His management ; reserving to ourselves only the diligent pursuit of duty ; and the peaceful and unanxious enjoyment of His daily, hourly kindnesses. ‘Come, Holy Spirit,’ (says another of the Lord’s servants,) ‘and teach me never more to question, never more to dispute, never more to resist, never

more to complain, never more to doubt, fear, or faint. But teach me entire submission to, and simple dependence upon, infinite wisdom, infinite power, infinite mercy.'

The Lord bless you beyond what I can ask or think !

Your affectionate,

J. T. N.

LETTER XXXI.

Ipswich, Nov. 19, 1840.

MY DEAR —,

I have no doubt that there is a very general and very hurtful mistake in the plans of instruction for children of all classes. I mean the too early and too rapid developement of the intellectual faculties. The mind should never be left idle or empty, but it should be neither crammed and distended, nor painfully exercised, till very considerable progress has been made in the growth of the physical powers. All that is done previous to this should have the nature, though it would be improper that it should always take the form, of amusement. It should be something as easy and unlaboured, as the conversation that passes between a mother and her little boy in taking a walk, where the child is perpetually following up question with question, or, if that source of occupation and interest fails, the mother has only to say—'Do you see that bird, or that flower?'—and curiosity and attention are instantly as much awakened, as if the discovery had been spontaneously made by the child himself. Lessons on objects are always entertaining and

instructive to little children, even when conducted with decided mediocrity of talent, provided there be animation in the instructor, and an affectionate pleasure in entertaining the little ones. May the Lord watch over your efforts in that and every other department, and bless your endeavour for His glory, and the abundant and effectual diffusion of His grace in your little charge at home! Put a little of your kind interest for my sinful and suffering population, into the form of supplication, as the Lord shall enable you, that the plan I have adopted may be effectual to the praise of His holy name, and the gathering of souls into the Redeemer's kingdom.

Believe me,
Your affectionate,
J. T. N.

LETTER XXXII.

ON CHANGING HIS HOME FOR ONE MUCH LESS CONVENIENT.

Ipswich, Dec. 8, 1840.

MY DEAR ——,

My present habitation, though you are unacquainted with its allotment in detail—you know in its general outward appearance. The frontispiece is a fair specimen of an old-fashioned, not ungentlemanly, nor uncomfortable dwelling, though marvellously unaccommodating in some particulars. A room both above and below is lost in affording a passage to another; so that, when I have a friend in the house, I am obliged to go through the kitchen, and up the

back-stairs to bed. But this is not one of the disqualifying circumstances of the change to me. It tells me, that the happiest arrangements on earth are inexpressibly transitory ; and that little Babels, as well as great ones, are either swept away from human sight and remembrance, or remain only to evince, that the comforts they once offered are no longer desirable, now they can be no longer participated ; and that a dwelling, which perpetually reminds me of its inconveniences, suits the frame of my mind in some respects better on that very account. Indeed, let but the idea be sanctified, presented in the clearness of its truths, and accompanied with the powerful revelation of those better objects, to which, by comparison and resulting preference, the imperfections of earthly things are intended to direct our attentions and desires, and the frame of mind produced would be just what one would desire. How precious is the occasional, even the momentary, realization of those heavenly things, when without a feverish impatience, or convulsive abstraction, we can steadily, calmly, and thoughtfully receive and retain, and claim as our's for ever all that is contained in that one word, "Abba, Father !" How composing and satisfying ! How universal and vigorous its influence ; for "all things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's !" * Thus "godliness hath the promise of this life, as well as that which is to come." † And then all things are the believer's—all with a blessing—"all working together for good," all fixed by eternal determination of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Our pains, difficulties, our circumstances, all ordered in proportion and kind and intensity, as the seasons, and the

* 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23.

† 1 Tim. iv. 8.

weather during the winter, for the production of the fruits of the earth in due season.

May the Lord grant us more full and clear persuasion of His electing love, that we may walk in a continual reliance upon what He has done, and is now doing for us, and the longing expectation of what He is about after a little while to effect for us, when He "shall come again to receive us to Himself, that where He is, there we may be also!"* May this thought sweeten toil, enable us to repose ourselves, and ours, our cares and sorrows, where the beloved disciple reclined at the last Supper! †

His love be with us all,

Your affectionate,

J. T. N.

LETTER XXXIII.

Ipswich, May 21, 1851.

MY DEAR —,

I must fall back on my old proposition, that the Lord always does the best for us. I trust that you feel this more and more, as life proceeds. If once we could be so unhappy as to prove to ourselves, that our gracious God has made one single mistake, how could we ever trust him again? What of improvement under any circumstances, could we hope for, but from this, that all is right, though we cannot see it; and that an infinitely wise management, is, in spite of appearances, bringing us "by the right way," and

* John xiv. 3.

† Ibid. xiii. 23.

preparing to carry us through and out of all our difficulties, with a high hand. But if I can detect one flaw in the plan, then I have no satisfaction for the past, rest in the present, or hope for the future. This, in fact, is the true difference between "the faith and patience of the saints," and the restless discontent of the world. O thou Infinite Wisdom! how often has the thought of Thee, when sorrow stopped my mouth, and stifled my feelings, risen before me in the majesty of tenderness, as the only refuge, the only solace of my soul. A thought of this kind includes a universal and unchangeable principle, pervades the whole range of being and events, carries its own undeniable truth on the face of it, and forms the fundamental axiom of the code of Almighty sovereign rule. And this I find more supporting and consolatory, than a long train of connected reflection, which tries and puzzles me, before I can get it completely before my mind. And though I am well aware that the feelings cannot travel as fast, in realizing the satisfaction of such condensed truths, as the intellect in apprehending them; yet it is a great thing gained to know, that, if I mean to have comfort, I have got the right door, and that, however long I may have to wait, I must—if I mean to succeed—knock only there. And hence the high privilege of realizing the presence of God, and maintaining communion with the Saviour: not only generally acknowledging his agency, but specifying Him as directing and controlling every event: disposing all hearts, and ordering all results. Hence also the privilege of pouring out those feelings, which such views, received and employed by faith, produce in the soul: and of making all, the materials of communion with God in the Spirit. Rest may sometimes be obtained by believing, and by telling

the Lord and yourself, that he is doing all things well ; when, as to any explanation that the understanding can produce, all is dark.

Thus far I had written, from recollection of reading your letter on its first arrival. I was therefore pleased, in reading just now further on, to find that you had been led, (I hope both of us by the same Spirit) into much of the same tenor of reflection practically, that I have followed out to some further length, suggestively. This affords a reasonable hope, that my letter may be the Lord's honoured instrument to carry on a train of thought, by which he is bringing you nearer to his own heart of love, and to that wounded side, from which flowed the balm of all our woe, and the fountain for all our crimson stains. And I have a better hope still, that if I have not said what brings him before you in the attractions of his kindness, he will manifest himself, plead his own cause, and lift up the light of his infinitely lovely and loving countenance upon you. Every blessing in time and to eternity to you and yours !

Your affectionate,
J. T. N.

LETTER XXXIV.

Ipswich, Sept. 12, 1845.

DEAR ———,

Your note reached me, when I was endeavouring, without neglecting my Sabbath duty, to get away from Ipswich, and to disperse the gloom that gathers on my spirits, from want of a due mixture of relaxation

and society ; and which prevents the mind from that healthy activity, which enables one to enjoy the inexhaustible satisfaction of the Gospel, and to employ the resources of prayer and praise.

If this be attempted always, the endeavour defeats its own object. A man who is always meditating, and praying, reading, or composing, or devising what he shall say appropriate to the case of one and another sick or ignorant person—he can hardly be ready to engage in any of these with the energy of his mind. There wants time and material for the mental power to repose and recruit. And as I have not this at my own house, I have run out, every fortnight during the last three months, to discover what I could find, that would afford an interval of repose, and at the same time rock the cradle of the mind with genial kindness, and the refreshing view of moving life. But even here I find it necessary to change my direction occasionally ; for novelty, though very far from my taste and choice, is mechanically and physically necessary. How wonderfully does all this illustrate the amazing goodness of God, who has upheld me so many years ! I am convinced, moreover, that I have not only been upheld, but matured in some degree in the fire ; and I never should have known what I do of the Lord's goodness, power, wisdom, and intense forbearance and compassion, if I had not needed it in the degree that I have. But it is a hidden life, which none but the subject of it can conceive. When our fellow-creatures are exhorting to patience, they are perhaps little aware that, if God had not granted patience, and called it forth into exercise in combination with faith, to a degree far beyond what they contemplate, the poor creature they are advising, would probably have been where hope never comes. And on

the other hand, when by perseverance they have succeeded in wearying a sufferer into silence, they conclude, that, because utterance has ceased, suffering has ceased with it. But to be enabled in some measure to dismiss all consideration of every created being, and to realize the Lord in all things; to live independent of the sympathy even of the wise and the good; and to wait for what the creature, animate or inanimate, shall be to us, till the Lord shew His mind concerning the matter, and put forth His power in our behalf, is a blessed life indeed, and a commencing of heaven on earth.

My love in Christ Jesus be with you both, and your dear children!

Affectionately yours,
J. T. N.

LETTER XXXV.

Ipswich, Nov. 22, 1845.

MY DEAR ———.

It was indeed no small indulgence to catch even that short interval with you. And I have been, in imagination, writing to you ever since—the rather because on the day I saw you, the atmospheric influence, which asserts so large a sway over me, deprived me of some considerable share of the enjoyment and profit I might have had in our conversation. I regret whenever I find my mind unstrung for my Lord's praises, and for dwelling on the things pertaining to His kingdom; but especially, when I am permitted to have a sight of my friends, and more especially when

meeting those whom I but seldom see. I would then particularly have my thoughts full of that gracious and Almighty Friend, who hath subdued the natural enmity of our hearts to Him ; has taught us to “love Him, because He first loved us,” and made us heirs through hope of His everlasting kingdom. Blessed indeed is the anticipation of one day meeting around the throne to part no more, but to enjoy together the salvation He hath purchased for us, and to ascribe that salvation to God and the Lamb for ever. How truly has “godliness the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come ;” and just because it has the promise of that future life ! For what comfort could we have in seeing each other merely with a view to satisfaction, derived from a world, of which we are convinced every year more sensibly, that it is in its nature something very opposite to “incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading ?” But to be accommodated with so many comforts, and compassed with so many mercies here ; and to know that these are only a road, a bridge, to those, which are infinite and everlasting ; does indeed give a patience of waiting, a content with imperfection, a mitigation to the hunger of immortal spirits for restoration to the happiness for which they were created, such as sometimes puts us almost into good humour with the present existence. I want nothing here on earth, which the Lord has not and does not see fit to give me. And in proportion as I enter into the full conviction, that He gives me every moment that which not only is sufficient for me, but what is, on the whole, the very best that could be ; and that every deviation would be a defect, and any material deviation a serious defect—I seem to have my “conversation in heaven.” Indeed nothing but heaven itself could make any addition to my comfort. But it is obvious that

this is from no attraction of earth, but derived entirely from turning away from it, and looking wholly in another direction. "This is not our rest;" and except as a scene of trial and preparation, and as supported by foreign comforts, which our gracious God furnishes to us in this wilderness, it would be unbearable indeed. And even with them all there is enough occurring in almost every hour that makes us groan and travail, "waiting for the adoption—to wit—the redemption of the body." *

Yours affectionately,

J. T. N.

LETTER XXXVI.

Ipswich, July 27, 1846.

Well, dear ——, you gave me hopes not only of another communication, but one upon the most interesting of all subjects. Well! strike before the iron becomes cool. While we are waiting to consider what shape we shall give to our thoughts, they often become too cold, to take the impression of any mould, into which we may pour them; and our purposed communications with the Lord, and with each other,

their currents turn aside,

And lose the name of action.

If some more strenuous longings after the establishment of the work of grace in your soul have been wrought there of late—if the tender claim of our adorable Redeemer's love, pity, forbearance, faithfulness, ever since he took the guidance of us through this

* Rom. viii. 23.

wilderness, begins to excite a tender call in the heart and conscience, do listen to it distinctly ; do employ your pen at all seasons you can secure, to transfer your thoughts to paper, while the subject is warm upon your heart. You will thus preserve the most interesting forms of the subjects that are precious to you, for future recollection, and for pleading the desires they gave birth to at a throne of grace. It is in this way that I have been enabled to secure all the little knowledge of the Lord and of my own heart, which I have been favoured to realize ; returning to the same points of self-examination, consideration, and prayer again and again ; and thus “in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, my requests have,” in some measure, “been made known unto God.”* My knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ has, (without being any thing like the average of believers, yet) been kept from being drowned in formality and spiritual sloth, or carried on with a declining frame by the course of daily events.

Read a portion of Scripture daily, getting time to analyze it, while dressing. And both then and afterwards turn it into prayer, with reference to your own immediate experience and frame, and the particular difficulties and snares, to which you find yourself exposed.

Be careful to return again and again to the same thoughts. If you detect some particular deficiency, or feel the desirableness of some grace, or some habitual subject of communion with God ; let that form a material for select written meditation, and be used in prayer with such alterations, or additions, as each successive occasion of using it seems to suggest.

* Phil. iv. 6.

I think you might find great advantage, under the Lord's blessing, provided it leads to the word of grace and the throne of grace, from a little book of daily reflections on passages of Scripture, called "the Believer's Daily Remembrancer," by the Rev. James Smith. I prefer it to any thing of that kind I have seen, and find it a very gratifying daily meal.

But do not fail to write to me; and while the Blessed Head of the Church is breathing upon our "smoking flax," let us endeavour to help each other by communion and prayer.

Your affectionate
J. T. N.

LETTER XXXVII.

Ipswich, Aug. 7, 1846.

I know indeed, dear ——, what an instrument in the tempter's hands, is a languid and restless state of constitution. But I know with a certainty (not of persuasion, but of demonstration) that by persevering adherence to deliberate eating, and taking the simplest and most nourishing food, and in the most moderate amount you can be satisfied with, that constitutional fault may be wonderfully alleviated, so as to smile at things, which would formerly have paralyzed me from head to foot. I am, however, more concerned to suggest what may answer a present *spiritual* purpose, than to enlarge upon the subserviency of physical ability. It is rather remarkable, that, after having intended for more than twelve months to read McCheyne's Life &c., I should have commenced it between the time of

receiving your first and your second letter. That book is indeed suited "to stir up our minds by way of remembrance;" to recal the earnestness, with which we formerly sought a sense of our interest in the Saviour, or some token of the Lord's kindness, or the renewal of covenant at each season of prayer; how we cultivated tenderness of conscience, and "wrought out our own salvation with fear and trembling;" and—instead of seeking to hush every imputation of singularity, and solicitously to court the completest approbation of those whose want of spiritual taste makes their praise a libel—we let it be known by a *flexible tender humility of determination*, that our love to them was the love of those, who had taken up the cross of Jesus, and that "by it we were crucified to the world, and the world to us." *

Well then —, read M^cCheyne again, not merely to get your mind excited, and weaned, in order to grow cold again; but to note and make memoranda, and actually adopt, so far as you can, those practical habits, that may bring you to "be a follower of him, as he was of Christ." You are, and you ought to be, interested and occupied about your children all day. But there is the beginning, and the ending of the day. And surely no Christian woman need allow herself to be robbed, even under the pressure of languor, of a portion of time for Scripture prayer, and what (if God be looked up to, for help in it,) is the digesting of Scripture, and the parent of prayer—*meditation*. You do not want a *long time*. It is the seizing some important idea, and getting *that* before your mind—not the extension of thought—that makes prayer valuable. Ponder the *ingratitude of sin—the jolly of leaning on*

* Gal. vi. 14.

anything but God—the blessedness of an assured sense of the Lord's present favour, habitually kept at all times, and all places. Put forth the challenge, even when weakness dulls the feelings and affections, and all enjoyment is utterly suspended—“It is God *that justifieth ; Who is he that condemneth ?*”* It is not the number of your thoughts in prayer ; but whether they are gold or lead, alive or dead. And if they be the offspring of a mind's eye turned directly to God, determine to take them up at the same upflowing heat, with which you took them the last time of prayer ; and with the same feeling, that hell is behind, as well as heaven before ; while at the same time, *if you be but pressing forward*, you know that hell has no more to do with you, than if there were no hell in existence. If you are intent on getting nearer, warmer with Divine love, more concerned for sin, realizing God's unfeigned joy to see you at the throne of grace, and waiting to know what you would have Him do for you and yours ;—“Command ye me,”—you cannot fail to get on by such short, fervid opportunities continually repeated.

I have kept this some days to add more, but must be content to do it in a separate dispatch. Love to your dear group.

Your affectionate,
J. T. N.

* Rom. viii. 33, 34.

LETTER XXXVIII.

Ipswich, Aug. 21, 1846.

MY DEAR —,

You have drawn my attention to a subject which (if I do not throw away the opportunity) may be profitable both to you and to myself. And I do not mean to sacrifice it for want of at least making the attempt, so you must look for a little stirring up. One of the most important passages in McCheyne is something like this—"Study your prayers." There are no materials which we ought to select with so much care, as materials for prayer. A minister's sermons require much care in selecting thought, either from his own mind, or from other sources. But it is far more important to select thoughts for prayer. Without meditation, we know not what we ask ; and how much we may ask which we do not want, or want only in a very inferior degree. And we are likely to fluctuate between two opposite, and equally hurtful, mistakes—repeating the same petitions in our prayers, and neglecting others wholly ; or, passing rapidly from subject to subject, and from the desire of embracing a greater variety, just glancing at a great many, without dwelling long enough upon any, to consider our wants, or frame an intelligent presentment of them in our applications. Few things are more useful than a well-digested, written enumeration of subjects of prayer ; and each a little opened as to its principal subdivisions. This would always keep the soul acquainted with itself ; and if this catalogue of subjects were interleaved with blank leaves, successive improvements might be continually made, enlarging our desires after the various

graces of the Christian character, teaching us how to plead with God—how to “fill our mouths with” scriptural “arguments;” * and to come on successive occasions to the throne of grace with some new scriptural statement of the ground of our dependence on the Saviour for acceptance, and with more enlarged statement of the fruits of the Spirit we desire.

This would be much assisted (if we were to be still more distributive in the course of each day) by little memoranda of the frame taken at three or four different times, and a line of prayer on the frame and circumstances at the time.

If I may venture to say I have made any progress, it has been in this way; repeatedly setting the same aspect of my mind before itself; repeatedly presenting the same aspect of it in prayer to God—as unbelief—not realizing God’s presence—waste of time, &c. I admit that I have done, as it were, nothing. But whatever is done, has been done by keeping some sort of memoranda, which included the idea of my own observation, and the Lord’s eye at the same time, followed by some poor cry for help, and improvement arising from what I then discovered. This resorted to again and again in prayer, has ended (I hope) in some knowledge of self, and of the Lord, and some looking less at “the things seen, and temporal, and more at those which are unseen and eternal.” I remember you said you found writing and re-writing a subject, or a statement of a subject, useful in getting it into your mind. It will do so especially respecting spiritual things.

Mark the frame of mind often in the day, and pray a minute to have it brought back to what it was after morning devotion. Notice in some principal particu-

* Job xxiii. 3.

lars, faith, love to God and the souls, communion with Him. You shall not go on long with these endeavours without success.

Yours faithfully,
J. T. N.

LETTERS TO AN ENDEARED BROTHER
IN THE MINISTRY.

LETTERS.

LETTER I.

UPON HIS BEING COMPELLED TO QUIT AN AFFECTIONATE FLOCK.

Ipswich, April 13, 1830.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

“The Lord is risen indeed; he hath put on His glorious apparel, and girded Himself with strength.”* You and your dear wife may be half inclined, on this concluding day, to look with weeping Mary into the Sepulchre.† But He is “gone up on high, and hath led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, even for us his once enemies,”‡ and for millions beside. And their salvation is sure; though “sifted as wheat,§ not a grain shall fall to the ground.” I have lifted up a sigh to the Lord for you, and I trust I shall, through the day, as strength is given me. But if we are praying for you and for your people, how ought we all to pray for your enemies, that, if there be any of the Lord’s people among them, they may be brought out! What an unhappy victory, if they should prevail

* Luke xxiv. 34. Ps. xciii. 1. P. T.

† Psalm lxxviii. 13.

‡ Written on Easter Day.

§ Amos ix. 9.

in turning out the gospel ! Once more, may the Lord support you both, and your dear flock, through this trying day ! I remember once when I used to wish such days over. I do not now. The Lord is everywhere at every time ; and often manifests Himself so much at trying times beyond others, that we could even wish the temporary eclipse, for the transporting effect of His reappearing lustre. On the other hand, when we have got over to-day, to-morrow has its trials. So the best way is to go on day by day with the full persuasion, that all is working for His glory and our good. This at least should be our plan. How many variations overreach upon our endeavours to execute it, you and I well know. But it is written—" My grace is sufficient for you," and faith answers—" When I am weak, then am I strong." *

Believe us, affectionately yours,

J. T. N.

LETTER II.

ON THE DEATH OF A BELOVED RELATIVE.*

Thorp Vicarage, June 17, 1834.

Ah, my *very* dear brother, how truly can I re-echo your affectionate superscription. Our hearts, I am sure, have been often in communion on the present occasion, though you have anticipated me in the expression of their contents. I now hope I may be able to persevere in the use of my pen, till I have got through this sheet,

* 2 Cor. xii. 9.

† See page 46.

and that the Lord, "in whose sight the death of his saints is precious," * may enable me both to respond to what His Spirit has been breathing in the thoughts of your heart on the occasion, and furnish me with something that may, by His blessing, add a little to our mutual stock of materials for edification. Never has anything occurred in my journey through life hitherto, which places in so distinct and powerful a light, the mixed and contrasted character of our present experience, as expectants of "a better and an enduring substance," and kingdom. Whether I feel for myself or others, I seem to be smitten with a stunning blow. I was no sooner connected with my wife's family by our marriage, than I was permitted to find by experience, not only how kind a heart there was in our late dear sister; but what a talent she had beyond most persons I ever knew, for making kindness effective, and for diffusing an influence and atmosphere of kindness wherever she moved and was known! In this view, if I look at the portion of the visible church in which we are placed, and the poor that are in it; I seem to look at a building, of which the wind has carried away a large portion of the roof, and left the inhabitants to abide the pelting of the pitiless storm. If I look at her in the more interior circle of her own friends and relatives, I see now an arch without a key-stone—members of a body, in a great measure deprived of that unity which made them one; that spirit which breathed towards them, and in them all; and that centre, at which they all occasionally met, and were refreshed, and carried home the disposition of love, and were one by love when absent, as they had been while together. For L. and myself, I

* Psalm cxvi. 15.

anticipate, that we shall feel more and more every step and movement, that we have lost a limb.

But when I look on the other side, and just simply consider, even a few of the precious and admirable features of the Lord's dealing in this matter, I scarce know how to be sad. If I can conclude any thing from the dying testimony of those, who have "the Lord their refuge, and the Most High their habitation," and "in whose hearts Christ dwells by faith;" then I think I never witnessed any thing that so clearly shewed the power of the Gospel, the faithfulness of God, and the all-sufficiency of the Redeemer, (no not by some considerable degrees,) as the circumstances of her dismissal. I think of the distinctness, the uniformity, the simplicity, the unlaboured naturalness of her expressions, expressing only what really existed; appropriating to her own use, and the enjoyment of those about her, the issues of the Bank of Faith, with no idea of ever raising any question about the TITLE, as feeling that her right and interest in it were indisputable. When I recollect what I have seen, and what must have been the condition of a mind enlightened as her's was in respect to its wants, if it had not been equally enlightened on the subject of their supply,—I cannot doubt, that I saw the finger of God; that "that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested, in the incarnation of our blessed Lord upon earth, was also then manifested in its spiritual power and presence. And I cannot but hope sometimes, that so clear a beam, so encouraging an invitation, (and which seems to speak that word to my very senses, "whose faith follow, seeing the end of their conversation,"*) may be

* Heb. xiii. 7.

the intimation, that the Lord is about to bring me home too.

Let us “be stedfast, unmoveable,” ever waiting upon God—I do not mean with that sort of confidence, which has any thing in it akin to the feelings of nature, or the result of some encouraging turn in our worldly schemes; but that which is built on the rock of ages, and which, as a rock, supports at the same time, and with the same certainty, the elephant and the worm, the soul that gaspeth as a thirsty land, and the happy subject from whom flow rivers of living water for the supply of others. Let us seek for infinite “strength to be made perfect in our weakness:” and come to Him incessantly for the renewal of it; for “the time is short; and yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.”*

My dear wife looks pale, very pale, and is in many respects very poorly. But we have seen that the best thing in the universe is to be in the Lord’s hands. Mrs. —, waking out of one of her short hurried dozes, said—“So He giveth His beloved sleep”—and I hope we shall never forget it.

Your affectionate,
J. T. N.

LETTER III.

Ipswich, Jan. 20, 1835.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

Your kind remembrance of me is truly refreshing; and I know in some measure better than they do, who

* 1 Cor. vii. 29. Heb. x. 37.

can write letters when they please, how to value the kindness of exercising your pen so long in my service. And though I am confident, I do not feel ungrateful; yet I am confounded to find, how impracticable it is to me, even while yet in the enjoyment of reading your communication, to set about a reply. So rapidly do the common daily occurrences pass before the retina of the mind; and so feebly and hastily are they apprehended, that it is almost ridiculous to find, how entirely the events of yesterday, and the previous day, seem obliterated from the memory's hold. Well—all illustrates—"My strength is made perfect in weakness"—There is the glorious truth, which each and all the phenomena of every pilgrim's experience in this vale of tears is calculated to impress. Wonderful is the support, by which I am carried through the actions of every day, and whether I have much to do or little, it seems to make no very observable difference. Notwithstanding the weakness of the act and the agent, I cannot quite doubt, that the Lord's people get a little food. And that He should permit me to give it them is marvellous. I have only time for our love to you both, and very little room. But love can be in a very little, and travel a thousand miles, and then, when brought into the kindly atmosphere of kindred minds, there is scarce any limits to its expansion.

Your affectionate,
J. T. N.

LETTER IV.

August 17, 1836.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

A considerable part of this day has been passed in the very gloom of dejection as to the natural spirits, though not in those pungent paroxysms of that feeling, which I have sometimes experienced. I look back at the precious indemnification and sympathy that I had at such times for twenty-five years : and the first feeling is heart-sickening : but I bless the Lord that it seldom abides. I see a steady, wise dispensation of infinite love, with an eternally glorious and gracious purpose ever in contemplation, and incessantly in a course of accomplishment, leading, I hope, to the establishment of that blessed frame—"Forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth to the things that are before, I press towards the mark" &c.* For, though this may seem inconsistent with what I have just said, of a constant tendency at such seasons of a retrospective kind, this is easily explained. Nothing checks that movement, as a habit, more than occasional *acts* of it. They suggest this—"Well ; and how did you, when you had your sympathy and your Comforter ? Were you much sooner relieved, or was the difference between then and now pretty much this, that two persons—one of whom is now beyond the reach of sorrow—were then pained, instead of one ?" Pray for me, that the Lord will open my ears, while the creature saith—"It is not in me"—and that He

* Phil. iii. 12—14.

will take whatever method is best adapted under His blessing to fix my whole heart on Himself.

kindest remembrances,

Your affectionate

J. T. N.

LETTER V.

ON BEING CALLED TO VISIT MRS. N'S GRAVE.

Ipswich, Jan. 19, 1839.

No—brother—you need not be afraid of recalling me to that spot, which holds all (do not think me ungrateful) that made earth interesting in the degree or kind that it once was. I am seldom long without visiting it in thought, and always willing to be led thither. Still venturing to believe that infinite love shall triumph, and honour itself in the salvation even of such a soul as mine, I look forward to the great “gathering day.” For a while our precious things must be laid waste, and to sense must decay. But not an atom will perish. Upon the faith of the antiseptic virtues of those “garments that smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia” of immortality, and in whose folds they are enwrapped; they and we (who shall soon be there too) shall “be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.” The triumph will then appear of that utterance—“O death! I will be thy plagues, O grave! I will be thy destruction.” “Death is swallowed up in victory. Even so—Amen—Come, Lord Jesus!” * And O let the whole interval—short or long—be a preparation for meeting there!

Your affectionate,

J. T. N.

* Hosea xiii. 14. 1 Cor. xv. 54. Rev. xxii. 20.

LETTERS.

The following Letters, being unconnected with each other, are given according to their dates.

LETTER I.

March 6, 1818.

MY DEAR —,

When I had just read your long letter, I was full of an answer. But I am not yet cured of letting those favourable seasons go by from some existing obstacle ; and then the preparation of mind is never to be recovered in the same degree. However, what may occur to me while the pen is in my hand, you shall have ; and may the Lord give his blessing to it ! As far as I can see, you and I appear very much to have changed places. There was a time, when I was a man without a daily employment, and without any compulsive incumbency to seek one ; yet feeling a frequent conscientious conviction, that I must and ought to do something, and not let time run away unimproved. Nevertheless I did—You were always at me with this one idea, clothed in different language according to circumstances—‘ Only have a calling, an obligation to work.’ I replied perpetually—‘ I do thus and thus ;

and when I am fit for it, I will moreover do such and such things.' Yet you would take no denial. You conceded that I did a good deal, but still contended, 'You have nothing to do; and what you want is something to do.' At last I presented myself for Ordination; and though I am not of a temperament of mind or body ever to be long without something to perplex, I think I can say, that I see nothing but increasing reason to be glad, that I took this step. The having something to do—provided it is the best we can do—is a most important thing.

A man who moves regularly through a certain walk of action, does a great deal more good than he is aware of; and perhaps his most important good he is least conscious of. While the peasant is plodding home, tired from his work (supposing him to be a Christian) his Minister sees him, and says—'Now I live; for that man stands fast in the Lord'; *there* is an argument for the doctrine that nobody can disprove, and which will come to the knowledge of many, that will never hear my sermon. "Ye are our epistle, known and read of all men."* He gives a nod as he goes by the cottage of one in his own sphere of life, a weaker brother, but equally sincere, only needing a particular sort of encouragement, which that friendly salute is just calculated to impart. He strengthens his hands, and keeps his head above water. I doubt not but some circumstance as trivial has been appointed from the foundation of the world to catch many a man at the moment of dejection, and prevent its fatal effects.

Now if I have not (and I think I have not) over-rated the probable, and frequently recurring, good effects of a man's regular walk through the round of

1 Thess. iii. 3. 2 Cor. iii. 2.

Christian duty, accomplished by the power and spirit of faith ; it follows almost necessarily that all this is the result of having a place, and being in that place, —of having a road marked out, and travelling in it.

It is almost necessarily denied to a man, who has not a sufficiently permanent place, or at least determined plan, to become a fixed point, a land-mark for the rest of the world, who are tossing upon its waves of trouble or of pleasure. For, not being able to steer by abstract faith, they have nothing but sight to guide them ; nothing but the concrete of constancy and consistency, which the Lord is pleased to manifest in the character of his servants, to convince them that the Bible is more than “ a cunningly-devised fable,” or faith or holiness more than a name.

Beside—speculation has a wonderful power in reproducing itself, and propagating its inherent mischief *ad infinitum*. A man has found a reason, that satisfies him, and carries him on cheerily through the daily dealing with that, to which he once saw strong objections, as viewed on simple and unsophisticated Scripture grounds. But by the time he has done this in two or three instances, he is prepared to defend any thing, to acquiesce in any thing. ‘ It is no departure ’ (the speculatist says) ‘ from principle ; and really I do not see, why I am not as useful here, as what some persons of peculiar views might think I should be in another place. But indeed ’ (he adds, with admirable versatility) ‘ I am by no means satisfied here myself ; and I am only waiting, till I see where I may make a change for the better.’ But then, every one, who sees how the contemplation and arrangement of that change is conducted, sees that in reality it is only an excuse for wearing out life in doing nothing ; that one speculation succeeds another without any other re-

commendation than novelty; and that the actual place and pursuit, justified and condemned at the same moment, is still persevered in. 'I don't do much, but a great deal more than many men, who perhaps think themselves very useful.' Take care you do not sit down under the influence of habits, which will improve you in nothing but the art of self-deception. The effect of this course, however apparently various, is yet in substance always the same; to justify whatever is agreeable to the present feelings, and to make any suggestion bitter, in proportion as it is the genuine dictate of humility, and faith, of unhesitating admission of the simple meaning, and unreserved obedience to the authority of God's word. Now observe before I close. I may mistake, I propose what I have said with diffidence; and shall be much better pleased that it does not apply to your case, and that you can put it behind the fire, and eject it from your mind, than that you should have any occasion to dwell upon it.

Your affectionate,
J. T. N.

LETTER II.

ON AN IMPORTANT MATTER THEN PENDING.

July 15, 1819.

MY DEAR MADAM,

I know not what will be the event. But one thing I know, that it will be, and is already, disposed after his good pleasure, "who ordereth all things according

to the counsel of his will." Could I keep the thought always before me, and connect with it, that the counsel of his will is the salvation of believing sinners, I should be always happy. I read, that on the night before Mordecai was to be rewarded, "the King could not sleep," and that his sleepless night led to the perusal of the Chronicles of the kingdom, and so to Mordecai, and what he had done.* I ask myself, who kept the king awake? and the answer can be no other than—"He who never slumbereth nor sleepeth." † And if he watched without ceasing over the temporal concerns of the Jews, how much more over the eternal interests of his "elect, who cry unto him day and night!"

The world's view of these things is, that God and the present life cannot be attended to together; and so they choose what they like best, and religion is neglected. But if I know anything of my own heart, it is the view of another world, which is the only quickening motive to all the little that I accomplish in this. If a day has passed away unprofitably, and I have neglected the souls that are thrown in my way; it is because I have not been looking unto Jesus; because I have not been anticipating the time, when he shall come to "receive" those that love him, "to himself, that where he is they may be also," ‡ and may be there for ever.

This prospect, steadily and believingly contemplated, would make all delightful—temporal engagements, and spiritual. For whatever the Lord has made a part of the duties belonging to the situation in which I am placed, is his service, and is sanctified by being devoted to his honour and glory. And when I can engage in

* Esth. vi. 1 2.

† Psalm cxxi. 4.

‡ John xiv. 8.

the most unimportant part of the regulation of my house in the fear of the Lord, I have no doubt that I am as much accepted by him through the mediation of the Redeemer, as when I am speaking from the pulpit. But too often I neglect the privilege of communion with him, and do not realize his presence by faith. Or else some doubt, or apprehension, or some feeling of distance distresses me, and makes his presence in some degree painful. But blessed be his name, who teaches me on such occasions to say—“Lord, to whom shall I go?”* Where shall I find such a friend, such a comforter, such a provider, such a protector, such a counsellor? I want one, not only to whom I can lay open all the sins and sorrows of my heart, which I never could to any human being; but I want one, who can see them, comprehend them, and remedy them without their being told; for time would fail, and language would fail, to pour out my heart even to him. But when I have been meditating and attempting to pray for half an hour, and find that more than half that half hour has been consumed in interruption and distraction, and that what I have laid before him leaves my case wholly unstated; I know that he can look into my heart, see all its wounds, its wants, and its burdens; and will do according to the riches of his grace in Christ Jesus, even “exceedingly beyond what I can ask or even think.” †

Believe me, my dear Madam, with Christian regards to every part of your family,

Sincerely yours,

J. T. N.

* John vi. 68.

† Eph. iii. 20.

LETTER III.

Bocking Hall, June 9, 1830.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Deliberation appears to me in the present instance to be especially necessary, as so many different lights may be thrown upon the subject in the course of prayer, and waiting upon the Lord.

Waiting also, when we stand in need of direction, seems especially honourable to the Lord. Here eminently—"he that believeth shall not make haste"* By precipitancy, you may satisfy a present feeling, which looks like determination to do the Lord's will. But the relief obtained will be very short, and followed by greater uneasiness, arising from a doubt, whether we have taken due time to wait for the Lord's communication of his will. This may occur after it is too late to retrace our steps.

But I observed, it is *honourable* to the Lord to wait. It is agreeable to his parental character to believe, that he desires not to drive, but to lead us, and to bring us to a step, which has been the result of consulting him, in a loving persuasion, that he prefers "mercy to sacrifice," and that we are not to be hasty to conclude, that we shall certainly please him, because the step we take is painful to ourselves. Only be ready to follow the Lord absolutely, and pray and strive to come to this determination unreservedly and universally. Perhaps you may *ultimately* find, that by the impression which has been made upon your mind, our Heavenly Father intends something vastly better and more ex-

* Isaiah xxviii. 16.

tensive than any mere single step or determination. He may intend to give you the general habit of more entire and absolute resignation of yourself to his will in all respects. This will be accompanied with that happiest of all frames—a full persuasion—a sensible perception—and enjoyment in the perception—of his love in whatever he appoints, or shall appoint for you, or require of you as long as you live. Waiting and enquiring upon this matter at a throne of grace, you will feel yourself more of a sojourner upon earth, and more habitually and familiarly have your “conversation in heaven, looking for the Saviour—the Lord Jesus Christ.” May He thus fulfil His gracious promise of drawing your heart, and the hearts of all his people, to Himself!

Believe me, yours faithfully,
J. T. N

LETTER IV.

TO A FRIEND ON THE SUBJECT OF HIS REMOVAL FROM ———

Ipswich, Oct. 29, 1844.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have been longing to write to you, but have been, as always, much hindered. This removal of yours at our period of life, cannot be unaccompanied with considerable excitement, to temperaments of mind and body so sensitive as ours are. I have never quite forgotten moving to Ipswich yet, from the spot where I was born and grew for forty years. I still catch myself, when contemplating going to

Bocking, saying—‘I am going home.’ And then, as the excitement is occasionally great, so the subsequent exhaustion and enervation is great also. But we must guard against mistaking natural feelings for mental conclusions; and against supposing that we have done erroneously, because we do not feel for the present as comfortably, as we did before the change was made. We may feel considerably otherwise; and yet the change may have been properly and advisedly made, and be followed by many and preponderating beneficial results. I transplanted several fruit-trees during the last unfavourable spring, and they still look drooping; yet I feel confident of their recovering it, and that they will ultimately profit by the removal. If we have taken, though not the best possible counsel, yet the best we could attain to, and, in the spirit of faith and dependence; not acting from any preference for our own opinion, or indulgence of our own inclinations, but with a real design to do the will of God, and to leave the event to him; do not let us permit ourselves to believe, that he has suffered us to go wrong, or that he will ultimately allow the results of a transaction, which has been so conducted, to be unfavourable.

We are apt (at least I am, and I would not distress you, by imputing what may not be one of your infirmities) to want to obtain the advantages of the *terminus ad quem*, (the position to which we have shifted), without giving up those of the *terminus a quo*. But this is impossible. We must regard these things in the light of a price and a purchase. We cannot obtain the thing to be purchased, and keep the purchase-money too. And as to the grand question, whether, on the whole, I have made a prudent and profitable barter, I have always suggested to you, that it is quite

unworthy our profession, as believers, to suppose that the Lord—when sought in such a matter, and when you are, I suppose, conscious that the step has been the consequence of no ardent, ungoverned preference of your own mind—would permit you to choose wrong.

And remember—it is no impeachment of the truth of this, to admit that you actually have not seen, or further—that it is impossible as yet that you should see, that you have done right. I was at least ten years in residence at Ipswich, before I had become possessed of that hold on my charge, which I had on the one I had quitted. Yet I can have no doubt now that the Lord had a work for me to do at Ipswich; or that he has actually honoured me, by making me in some small degree an instrument of good.

I might, in some respects, have been more comfortable if I had remained in Essex. But it was not only His will, but I think I can see not a few particulars, in which it would not have been so well. Yet, as I said, I could not see this at once; no, not for years; and during all that time unbelief was permitted to ask—“Is the Lord among us, or not?”*

I found many difficulties which I did not expect. I missed many advantages which I had anticipated. And so, for a time—it may be a considerable time—it will probably be with you. And our particular constitutional feelings aggravate these things. In what you have left, you see the sudden breaking off of the different departments of a work, that had been going on for thirty years. In the situation to which you are gone, you have not even got hold of the end of the thread, which you have first to wind, (while no immediate use or application of it appears) and in due time

* Exod. xvii. 7.

to bring all the pieces of your work together, and fasten it into one firm, orderly, consistent whole.

What the Lord has yet shewn you of the materials for this, is but a small part of them, and of that part you can yet form no judgment. But time, under his providence, will develope what as yet you do not dream of. Give yourself cheerfully and devotedly into his hands, and he will employ you. Meantime let both of us consider, that, whatever cross we are under, it is a proof of his love, and intended for our profit, to “humble and prove, and to do us good at the latter end.” Look, dear Sir, what after all he has done for you, which he has not done for thousands.

Yours affectionately,

J. T. N.

LETTERS.

The following beautiful letters may fitly conclude the series. The first, though of later date, in the edifying exhibition of the general design and blessing of affliction, will naturally introduce the application to the specific chastening of bereavement.

LETTER I.

UNDER AFFLICTION.

St. Helen's, Oct. 31, 1843.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

I would endeavour to have some little Christian communication by letter, that we may *both* gather some good from those trials, which our gracious and wise Father has sent on you and your endeared and estimable partner. And one lesson emerges on the first moment of contemplation; how entirely, and with what persevering resolution we should bid our judgments stand by, and confine our reflections on the Lord's dispensations, to simple, attentive, submissive consideration; waiting till the vision speak of itself; looking for nothing but instruction; and never thinking to bring any preconceived, or prepared wisdom, which we may exercise upon the Divine proceedings!

I might have expected, that the trial, to which the wise tenderness of our Almighty friend has subjected Mrs. ——— and yourself, might have been assigned to some loiterer or lingerer in the vineyard; or to awaken stifled convictions, or to recal some grievous backslider. But no! I should have “erred, not knowing,” or not recollecting, “the Scriptures,” if I had so concluded even *a priori*. For the Lord saith—“Whom he loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.”* What mistakes then do we commit, even in our own trials, as well as in those of our friends! I am stumbled, discouraged, impatient, gloomy at those things in the experience of myself and my friends, which seem as if the Lord were standing at a distance, and unkind, when I ought especially to distinguish his smiles, his favours, the interpositions, on which our enjoyment of his eternal favour, and blissful presence is suspended. For “when we are judged,” (how strong is the word!) “we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.”†

We shall meet, I hope, dear brother, and these trials, (but then again unbelief is ready to ask—where are *my* trials,—what have I that in this respect testifies that I am one of the Lord’s family? What is there that resembles his dealings with his dear and approved servants? But I would hope that he is going on to overcome the difficulties of even such a callous heart as mine, and that “where sin hath so abounded, grace shall yet more abound.”‡ Therefore I will resume my sentence, and say) these trials—your great ones, and my light ones—are preparing us, (if I “be counted worthy to stand before the Son of

* Heb. xii. 6.

† 1 Cor. xi. 32.

‡ Rom. v. 20.

man,") to meet, and enjoy communion with him, and with each other through an endless eternity. Our experience, and especially our painful experience, and our perception, and consciousness of his varied and incessant relief and deliverance, is to furnish the materials of our everlasting songs: to be the subject, on which the Divine glory and grace of the Redeemer is to be illustrated, in endless duration, and inexhaustible variety.

Dearest brother, may this, among many other thoughts, if it be the Lord's good pleasure, be sanctified to throw a lustre on your present exercises of mind and body, personal and relative !

In all, I trust, both you and your dear partner find that the Lord is with you of a truth, revealing as well as exercising his fatherly love and care, and causing you to realize both the heart and hand of his infinite love. And as he has seen fit to detain you in the school of trial, and to propose deeper and more difficult lessons, may he make them the means and occasions of making his designs clearer, of causing his love to shine with more warmth into your hearts, and of drawing you into nearer, more habitual, and sanctifying communion with himself ! May all the dealings of his grace with you, have a transforming effect, moulding you more and more to his image and likeness, and exciting more lively anticipations of his glory ! Send me word how you and Mrs. ——— are ; but do not write even a line, if the exertion be uneasy or imprudent.

Your affectionate friend and brother,

J. T. N.

LETTER II.

TO A BEREAVED WIDOW, THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF A FRIEND.

May 28, 1817.

DEAR MADAM,

May our gracious Lord, of his infinite mercy, instruct me how to improve this awful Providence to my own warning and edification, and enable me to speak a word in season to those who are at present under his chastening hand! It is perhaps too soon to intrude upon the sacred seclusion of such sorrow. But whenever Mrs. ——'s mind is sufficiently at liberty from deeper meditations on this event, assure her of the concern we feel—I would almost have said—sympathy—but who can sympathize with such a sufferer, but one actually in the same situation? And when we really sympathize under the present experience of the same sorrows, as we attempt at other times to console, how helpless and unprovided do we often feel! Still “grace is sufficient.” And the Lord is pleased to make “his strength perfect in weakness,” and to give to our poor suggestions (easy as they are to be confuted upon mere reasoning principles) a healing or tranquilizing efficacy, to which they have no native pretensions. Indeed he makes his people very much more susceptible of consolation than others. Hence arises a great share of the soothing effect, which they sometimes experience from the treasures of heavenly wisdom, when ministered by instruments weak and mortal like themselves.

It is written—“Thy Maker is thy husband,” and again—“Leave thy fatherless children; I will preserve

them alive ; and let thy widows trust in me.”* Surely there is something that calls for our particular attention, in reading the sacred volume—something nearly connected with the degree of edification and support that we receive in the *various human relations*, under a resemblance to which the Lord of Hosts—“ the mighty God—the Redeemer—the Holy one of Israel ” is pleased to reveal himself. When he is styled the Father, Master, Husband, Friend of his people, it seems to me to intimate, not only the Divine all-sufficiency, but something more. To suggest this all-sufficiency, it had been enough to have said—“ As thy day is, so shall thy strength be. Because I live, ye shall live also.” † But he is not satisfied with assuring us that all shall be well at last. He pursues his investigation of the circumstances of poor and suffering humanity, into every variety of form and combination, that the relations of life furnish ; and so speaks as is absolutely necessary to the character of one, who would *comfort indeed*. He convinces the sufferers by the specific appropriateness of his expressions, that he “ knows their sorrows.” ‡ Nearly connected with this thought is the recollection, that for all we have enjoyed, and all that we are now bereaved of, we are indebted to His Providence. He chose our friends, our comforts. He placed them within our reach. He gave us our mutual dispositions and attachments, and all the countless, hourly satisfactions, that arose out of them. If it were God in all things, that was indeed the real ground of the capacity they had to afford us satisfaction *while he gave* ; this is a strong inducement to us to seek all things in God, when he *is pleased to take away*. When our Lord left his disci-

* Is. liv. 5. Jer. xlix. 11.

† Deut. xxxiii. 25. John xiv. 19.

‡ Ex. iii. 7.

ples, he said—"I will not leave you comfortless"—the word is in the original "Orphans." *

May He be pleased to manifest his presence to the hearts of our dear friends, and enable them, even through the present cloud of sorrow, so to apprehend his all-sufficiency, that the language of their hearts may be—

"O thou Saviour, Shield, and Sun!
Shepherd, Brother, Husband, Friend!
Every precious name in one;
I will love thee without end."

With our united and kind regards,
I remain, Madam,
Your obliged servant,
J. T. N.

LETTER III.

TO THE WIDOW HERSELF.

June 15, 1817.

MY DEAR MADAM,

We were indeed greatly comforted to be assured of the state of your mind in your own hand writing. Though I was desirous to write what the Lord might offer to my thoughts on the usual Scripture topics of consolation, I know how feeble all such suggestions are, except he is pleased to put his hand to the work. And "when he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?" † To be enabled to look up to him, and

* John xiv. 18.

† Job xxxiv. 29.

say—"When my spirit was in heaviness, thou knewest my path" *—by a movement of the thought, a silent aspiration, to call his attention to the whole complex sufferings of an afflicted heart, which a day's conversation could not adequately represent to the most sympathizing friend—this is indeed a privilege. Herein we have Divine perfection and human sympathy combined; for "truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his *Son Jesus Christ.*" There is also another view in which an application to God in affliction may be considered. It is a renewing our covenant with him, a fresh expression of dependence upon his all-sufficiency, and willingness to hear and to help. David's circumstances in Psalm cxlii. are very strikingly illustrative of this; and his enumeration of them, terminating in that affectionate, resolved, believing address—I said "Thou art my refuge (protection) and my portion (supply) in the land of the living."

Sometimes I think I can call him *my refuge* and *my portion*; and I hope my conscience bears me witness, that I deliberately desire no other portion. But a continual nervous complaint in my head so interrupts all clearness of perception, as to render my spiritual views very cloudy. I have some notion of Christian privileges and Christian liberty, and that I have a right to rejoice in the Lord always. I seem—as in Mr. Newton's illustration—like a servant who, at a great entertainment, carries the dishes to the guests, but is not permitted to taste of them himself.

Well; if it be so—even this is an unspeakable honour; and "I had rather be a door-keeper in his house, than to dwell" † elsewhere in the highest honour this world can confer. But if ever I have felt

* Psalm cxlii.3.

† Psalm lxxxiv. 10.

in any considerable degree, the peculiar consolations of religion, it has been in a season of distress, and especially under the removal of a dear friend. There is sometimes, (when no reasoning, no statement of our case that we can make—no application even of Scripture truths that we can accomplish—answers to the throbbings of the heart) there is a beam of light, conveyed by some text, or apparently casual remark, that comes, accompanied with the conviction—“This hath God wrought”—no human power could do it. Sometimes the influence is exerted upon our meditation; and we obtain views of the Lord’s all-sufficiency, compassion, and other attributes that tranquillize in an instant. The soul feeds and lives upon them, and “goes in the strength of that meat” many days. And in after life the sense of them is renewed. They are Ebenezers. In some following trouble (for the waves of this troublesome ocean roll one upon another) we can look back and say—‘I had such a sight of his all-sufficiency and love, that, though “darkness that might be felt,” may shut out the view of them, there they are, though I cannot see them now.’

I am, dear Madam,

Yours faithfully,

J. T. N.

P. S. What a striking combination are the two concluding verses of Psalm lxxvii.—“Thy way is in the sea and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known. Thou leadest thy people like a flock.”

LETTER IV.

TO THE SAME ON THE DEATH OF HER CHILD.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have heard that a part of you, and a very dear part, is made immortal; placed for ever beyond the reach of all sorrow, and in possession of peace and bliss, that admits of no increase, till the body also shall be "delivered from the bondage of corruption," and, being made like to Christ's glorious body, shall be fitted to celebrate his praises, admire the heights and depths, and support the exstasy of apprehending his love.

Is there anything which God himself could have done, to have conferred a greater honour on you? Except you had been the individual, to whom the angel had said—"Hail! thou that art highly favoured"*—you could not, as a mother, have greater honour, than to be the parent stem of an off-set now planted in the paradise of God. And if you contemplate your dear departed with reference to her late and present circumstances, surely all the wishes that your heart ever formed for her, if gathered into one effort of desire and affection, are now unspeakably exceeded by that blessed consummation—"Absent from the body, and present with the Lord." † Surely the travail of your soul will be satisfied with that, which satisfies "the travail of her Redeemer's soul;" who now rejoices in the attainment (so far) of the fruit of his precious atonement. Now the angels, who rejoiced when she

* Luke i. 28.

† 2 Cor. v. 3.

first cried out—"What shall I do to be saved?"—are singing for joy at her possession of what she prayed, and laboured, and watched, and waited, and longed for; and, waiting in believing hope, hath obtained. Look at her happiness, Rev. vii., and at her triumph, Rev. xv. And shall we not joy in all this joy? O that we were now with them! Yet such as we may do, let us do even on earth in the way of rehearsal and anticipation. They sing the song of Moses and the Lamb—"Worthy is the Lamb."* Can you retrace the steps of your dear pilgrim on earth, and not call out at every step—How admirable, how adorable have been his ways! how fitted to be the Shepherd of his people! what exquisite skill; what unwearied patience; what chastened forbearance; what effectual tenderness; what soul-winning, soul-subduing kindness! And how happy she, who is now gone, where "he that is in the midst of the throne shall feed her, and lead her to fountains of living waters!" †

My heart is with you, and it is an indulgence to tell you so. If the Lord should put a spiritual interest into these few lines, to which they have no intrinsic claim, and make them the least acceptable to you, may the glory be to him of creating something, where nothing was before! I take my leave.

Your affectionate,

J. T. N.

* Rev. xv. 3; v. 12.

† Ib. vii. 17.

LETTER V.

TO ANOTHER FRIEND UNDER BEREAVEMENT.

Ipswich, Aug. 4,

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Mr. ——'s letter reached me yesterday morning. But I found it impracticable to indulge my earnest desire of sending such thoughts, as the Lord might suggest by the affliction, which in his infinite wisdom and love He has been pleased to lay upon you.

And now that I have my pen in my hand, shall I say—how utterly powerless I feel to say anything to the purpose? I believe a feeling of this kind may not be the most unpromising feature of a first adverting to the painful subject. Were I to attempt any earthly view of the subject to suggest comfort, it must be impracticable. Nothing can bring comfort within sight, much less within reach, but the consideration, which refers all to the sovereign disposal of God. And this at the same time contemplates that sovereign will, as directed in its exercise by all that infinite tenderness, and compassion, which the Scripture ascribes to the Almighty and the covenant relation, in which He stands to us as our Father in Christ Jesus. This is a view, which, if we dwell upon it, is adapted powerfully to deal with the painful struggles of our poor, helpless reason, and most tenderly to soothe and compose our agitated and wounded feelings. How much of all that can be said on the subject is included in that passage, which the Church puts into the mouth of her mourners—"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!"* The

* Burial Service. Job i. 21.

Lord gave us all that we ever had—all the tender, cheering, sustaining relations of kindred and friendship, and especially those, in which natural ties have been endeared, strengthened and refined by “a good hope through grace.” He gave the susceptible faculties, by which the gratification such relations convey to the heart and the intellect, are estimated and enjoyed. And when this recollection is joined with the consideration that He “hath taken away” what He gave; it does not merely suggest that a sense of the past benefit ought to reconcile us to the resumption of it by the hand which gave, and which has the right at pleasure to resume its own gift. The reflection is one, that brings with it vastly more extensive, more varied, and more effective materials of consolation. If He who gave has taken away, He is not only the same Being, but He is unchangeably the same. And therefore the same Infinite tenderness and sympathy, and wise forethought for our highest interest was at work, and for our greatest practicable share of comfort on the whole, when He did take away, as when He gave. It is still the same “God in Christ reconciling us to Himself, and not imputing our iniquities to us.”*—The same God, “who spared not his own Son;” † the same Christ who “loved not his life to the death” for our sakes, whose “goodness and mercy have followed us all our days.” and whose sympathy is such, that it could not pass over the short interval of suspense, before He restored Lazarus to his weeping friends, without joining in their impassioned sensibility.

Well! this is a feature of great importance to us in the character and proceedings of our infinitely gracious Saviour. It is one exemplification of a never

* 2 Cor. v. 19.

† Rom. viii. 32.

changing, never-ceasing principle always at work, namely—"that He doth not afflict willingly,"* nor without the ulterior intention of future manifestation of mercy, and loving-kindness, which shall swallow up the remembrance of our trials, or allow its continuance, only to heighten our sense of the love which has removed them. And also that while the trial continues, He never ceases—be the interval long or short—to exercise the most intense and incessant sympathy. Still He is unwearied in inventing, applying, and effecting those supplies of grace and consolation, which shall sustain and comfort, and above all, edify and educate us for the blessedness, for which He is preparing us. I know, my dear friend, that if I were to expect any effect to be produced by the statement which I have here made, I could not be warranted in the expectation. I have said nothing that is not as familiar to your mind as my own. And I should, if I were to look at the mere suggestion, sooner think of expressing my condolence only, than of speaking a word of consolation. I have lost a valuable and valued Christian friend, and I am pained for your loss as well as my own. But I know who can make these truths, which I have so feebly presented, effectual beyond all that I contemplated in suggesting them, even "beyond all that I can ask or think." To Him I commend you, to His faithful care, His infinite love, His inexhaustible grace.

Grace, grace be with you all! Believe me your affectionate friend,

J. T. N.

* Lam. iii. 36.

PART IV.

LETTERS IN THE EXERCISE OF A PASTORAL
OR GENERAL MINISTRY.



This series of Mr. Nottidge's correspondence affords some view of the general standard and spirit of his Pastoral Ministry. Truly did he "watch for souls as one that must give account ; warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that he might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." * His labours were indeed much circumscribed by an enfeebled state of health, which often rendered his work painful to the flesh. But the recollection was always present to his mind, "He is worthy, for whom I should do this." † Love to his Master and to the souls of his fellow-sinners gave nerve to the "willing spirit," that enabled him to triumph over "the weakness of the flesh." Onward he went—often with a tottering step—but ever with a sustaining supply of spiritual vigour beyond the course of many brethren of younger years. A confusion of head, and constitutional languor, frequently unfitted him for collected and continuous converse. In these circumstances he was wont, sometimes when absent from his flock, to avail himself of his pen, in order to deal with the more anxious cases with greater clearness

* Heb. xiii. 17. Col. i. 28.

† Luke vii. 4.

and directness. A few rough, unfinished sketches are here given, which formed the ground-work of a more considerate address, and which, even in their imperfect state, will be valuable specimens of Pastoral fidelity. The Ministry of his pen extended however far beyond his parochial bounds. "Watching in all things." "doing the work of an Evangelist"—thus did he "make full proof of his ministry." * Many cases came before him in the course of Providence, to which he endeavoured to give "a word in season." In other cases his counsel was sought, as a Minister of sound wisdom ; when he was always ready to "give his judgment, as one who had received mercy of the Lord to be faithful." †

* 2 Tim. iv. 5.

† 1 Cor. vii. 25.

LETTERS.

LETTER I.

DEAR SIR,

In the course of the last twelvemonth, I have seen you twice in great apparent danger of your life. Once, so little hope remained, that you seemed to give yourself up, and to say with Hezekiah—"I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world."* But by His almighty power, who bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up again; I have seen you mercifully restored. I have witnessed therefore whatever may most interest any one, who is tenderly concerned for you. These are transactions, that give occasion for the exercise of all the hopes and fears, that one human being can feel for another.

The bed of sickness is the place for a man to "reap what he has sown." If he has been "sowing to the Spirit," "he set to his seal that God is true," that he hears prayer, and performs his promise. This is the difficulty, for which religion offers to provide. If it is not good for this, what is it good for? If it does not do this, it does nothing.

* Isaiah xxxviii. 11.

If you had not found that it had this effect ; that your past endeavours had led to clear views, and comfortable hopes respecting another world, I might have expected, that your first thought on your recovery would be, to set upon a closer and more diligent search of the sacred Scriptures. I might have hoped you would have said—‘ I have not found that support under the awful expectation of death, which is the experience of the servants of God, who then “ lift up their heads, because their redemption draweth nigh.”* But nothing deserves my attention, when compared with this great concern ; and whatever I may have hitherto omitted, I will devote my life to discover and rectify my mistake.’

But the result has been exceedingly discouraging. I have seen you in sickness, unprovided with spiritual comfort, and uncertain and at loss where to go for it. I was distressed beyond measure to see your mind apparently so wholly unprovided, and so willing to lose the thoughts of your condition in a dozing forgetfulness.

Yet this was not so awful to me as what followed. Scarcely was danger two days old, (even before you were strong enough to leave your chamber,) when the world seemed to lay as complete hold upon your mind, as it has upon a young man. Politics, the passing events of the day, and all the motley nothingness, that makes up the conversation of nine tenths of mankind, were eagerly resorted to, whenever opportunity presented itself. Surely I never was more afflicted in my life, than to see how satisfied and delighted you were with the good-natured, but chattering, thoughtless, apothecary. Not many hours had passed, since we saw death in

* Luke xxi. 28.

your countenance; and neither you nor we expected you could survive. And to see the thoughts of your deliverance scarce occupying a few occasional remarks, while folly was suffered to talk you and itself tired.

Scripture affords us examples of the people of God, both on a sick bed, and a state of recovery. For an instance of the first, let us take Jacob. Let us observe the conduct of this simple, unlettered, but faithful Patriarch in his last affliction.*

He calls his sons around him, and—moved neither by fear nor favour—"rightly divides" his last word of exhortation; and though he commends those whom he could commend, he sharply reproves those who required it. He admonishes them, and addresses a remark to each concerning their future lot. But there was one prevailing idea upon his mind, that could never long be suppressed, and which breaks forth on this occasion in a very striking manner. He stops in his exhortation to express his faith and reliance in these words—"I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord!" † How short and simple, but how clear and satisfactory, are these words! They leave us at no loss to guess, what was the success of waiting for the Lord's salvation. It is evident enough, that he was "not disappointed of his hope,"—that he had not waited in vain. After this he was gathered to his people.

But Hezekiah gives an example of one restored to health, after having been brought, as he himself expresses it, "to the gates of the grave." His writing, "when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness," (Isa. xxxviii. 9,) shews the marks of a truly humbled and converted soul, chastened by the Almighty, and taught as well as chastened.

* Gen. xlix.

† Verse 18.

From the 10th to the 14th verse, he describes his affliction, and its overwhelming effect upon soul and body—present suffering and desponding expectation. “From day to night” (says he) “wilt thou make an end of me.” In the end, however, of the 14th verse, mark his prayer, and the remarkable introduction—“Mine eyes fail with looking upwards: O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me.”

Like David, he looked to that quarter, “from whence” alone he knew that “help could come. As the eyes of a servant look unto the hand of his master, so the eyes” of Hezekiah “waited upon the Lord, until he should have mercy upon him.”* And he waited long, until “his eyes failed with looking upwards”—his eyes failed—but his patience did not fail; his faith and his hope did not fail. He did not look in a different direction, because he was tired “with looking upwards.” His painful waiting for God’s answer did not change his mind about God himself. He did not turn from the Creator to the creature: nor place his dependence upon means and instruments. He still looked to God as his only help. He did not send, like Ahaziah, to enquire of the idols, “as if there were not a God in Israel;” † nor did he do even like Asa, who, though in his general character a pious man, yet is blamed, because “in his disease he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians.” ‡ But Hezekiah, though “his eyes failed with looking upwards,” still was steady in his confidence. His resolution was to wait for “the promise, though it should tarry.” He could quiet his soul in the mean time; he could give a reason for the delay, as the penitent did.—“I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I

* Ps. cxxi. 2; cxviii. 2.

† 2 Kings i. 3.

‡ 2 Chron. xvi. 12.

have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me." "O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me." *

And when the Lord heard his prayer, he seems to have been quite overwhelmed with gratitude. He could think of nothing but the Lord's goodness to him; and so full was his mind of this subject, that he could not find suitable words to express himself.—“What shall I say? He hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it.” Then follows a remarkable expression, which shews that his feelings, though powerful and overwhelming at the time of his deliverance, were not confined to that time. His preservation not only warmed his heart, but influenced his judgment. It laid him under obligations, which he felt and acknowledged. It determined his plan as to the future government of his heart, and regulation of his conduct.—“I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul.”

This was his reflection. Unhappily the disposition of the generality of mankind is directly opposite. In affliction they are overwhelmed with slavish fear and despondency; and when by an indulgent Providence they are restored, instead of gathering instruction from what they have suffered, they are intent only upon driving out the painful idea of the necessity of repentance, and a change of heart. While the rod hangs over their heads, they readily promise, that they “shall go softly all their years.” Hezekiah made his promise, when he was recovered of his sickness. But those views of eternity and of living in expectation of eternity have “no beauty, that they should desire them.”

* Micah vii. 9.

“What! (say they) give up all our comforts?” But what were all your comforts worth, when you lay at the gates of the grave? Would you not have given them all for a Scriptural, well-grounded hope of salvation? Would you not have given worlds, if you had them to give, for that blessing? Is it not better to lose your life in order to save it, to give up these high-valued temporal enjoyments, when you can secure eternity in exchange; than to wait till the time, when, if the world could be given, it would be of no avail? How pathetic is that exclamation of the Redeemer—“If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes! *

Hezekiah thought there was no room for hesitation. He gave up his whole life to God. He felt the force of that argument, which the Apostle Paul afterwards used, “I beseech you by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” †

LETTER II.

DEAR SIR,

The state of your mind, when I called on you on Saturday, was too interesting to a person of common feeling and reflection, to be long absent from my thoughts: and I have intended almost from the time I left your house, to put together a few remarks on paper relative to your present experience.

* Luke xix. 42.

† Rom. xii. 1.

I can in some measure imagine myself in your situation ; as I have more than once seemed to be on the brink of an eternal world, when my mind was only half awakened, and when my views were not clearly arranged, and when consequently I was liable to much incursion of apprehension and perplexity. I have also at different times in my life, been misled by false principles, and erroneous teachers ; and when I have wished to have my mind especially collected, and serious, and impressed, it has been distracted with vain reasonings, and pernicious imaginations.

It becomes then a most important question—Where shall a returning sinner—burdened with the guilt of his past life, feeling the corruptions of his heart, and still smarting under the remains of false applications, and injudicious treatment—where shall he direct his thoughts for relief? He is weary with his burden ; he is conscious of the mistakes that have attended his former endeavours to remove it. He is convinced, that he can never be relieved from the load, till by faith it is transferred thither, where God has virtually placed it already : as it is written—“ All we like sheep have gone astray ; we have turned every one to his own way ; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” *

Thus far then a man in such circumstances has great cause for thankfulness, that he is brought within sight of his only real remedy. And beside this, he is brought in general, not only to acknowledge this to be the way of salvation, but to approve it. “ The preaching of the cross is ” no longer (to use the Apostle’s expression) † “ foolishness to him.” There is already so much resemblance to the spiritual mind,

* Isaiah liii. 6.

† 1 Cor. i. 18.

as to welcome that method of salvation which God has appointed. He is willing to "behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." The principal difficulty is, to be able to appropriate this blessing,—to call this Saviour his own. Sometimes he thinks he can do so. And at seasons, when the spirits are lively, and the mind unclouded, he is willing to be satisfied that he is a believer, and actually invested with all a believer's privileges. But a dark, dejected, perplexed interval occurs; and then he not only feels, as if he could believe no longer, but as if he questioned whether he ever had believed at all.

This I apprehend is, though in very various degrees, the experience of almost all, who are brought to the saving knowledge of the truth. And if we consider the matter, we shall see that the appointment of the Almighty in this respect, may conduce to many valuable purposes.

1. A man learns from hence, that all is of God: that we depend on him for every thing; that salvation is not of ourselves, but "of God, who sheweth mercy;"* that we cannot preserve our minds in any one frame for a moment. And in consequence of this persuasion, we learn

2. To wait on God for everything. How continually does this waiting temper of mind shew itself in those who have been most eminent as men of prayer, and faith! In the Psalms, for instance—"I waited patiently, and sought the Lord, and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry." † We learn also from these examples not to be discouraged, though we should have to wait long. Thus David—"Wait, I say, on the Lord," ‡ and Lamentations iii. 25, 26. "The Lord

* Rom. ix. 16.

† Psalm xl. 1. See also lxiii. 1, 5, 7; cxxx. 5, 6.

‡ Ib. xxvii. 14.

is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." And yet read the former part of the Chapter, and see under what discouraging circumstances this was said. Again we have the same sentiment, Micah vii. 9., and Psalm xlii. 11.

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LETTER III.

TO A BACKSLIDER.

Ipswich, Dec. 6, 1819.

SIR,

I know that advice, especially if it conveys or implies reproof, is generally least welcome, when it is most wanted. If however any harsh word should slip from my pen, it is very far from my intention. I know that yours is a case which calls for great tenderness and fellow-feeling; and I would endeavour to "restore them that are fallen, in the spirit of meekness."

"Let thine heart be toward the highway wherein thou wentest."* I know what arts the enemy will use to prevent your return; and how sometimes one stratagem will be employed, and sometimes another, to keep you away from Christ, and to maintain the love and the practice of sin. Sometimes there is the overwhelming horror of having so greatly fallen, which seems to laugh to scorn the possibility of return, or

* Jer. xxxi. 21.

the hope of perseverance, even if you could return : sometimes the fear of man, which leads you to think it better to be consistently sinful, than inconsistently pious : sometimes you will be soothed by your escape from the inconveniences and self-denial belonging to religion, and perhaps by some worldly indulgences resulting from giving it up. But the worst of all, and that which is growing every day in strength, while “fear is cast off, and prayer is restrained before God”—is the notion of the *impossibility* of returning. And *that* is seldom long entertained in the mind, without being followed with the thought, that it is almost *unnecessary* ; that you were formerly attempting something unattainable ; and that you may very well sit down in a state “neither hot, nor cold,” since *what some people call religion* is above your mark. Mere morality, or formality, seems such a refuge to a man, who has sunk into shameful sin ; that the enemy of souls makes use of the pain and disgrace he feels at his enormities, to blind him to the destructive nature of an heartless religion. And as age creeps on, and the passions cool, this is often the resource of the profligate sinner, or daring backslider. He soothes himself with false hopes, makes no profession, and escapes the opposition from the world, that arises from a more consistent and faithful adherence to the Gospel.

But if you seek the Lord, he will be found of you. Read the earlier chapters of Jeremiah. Isaiah i. Hosea xiii. and xiv. Psalm li. 1 John i. and ii. and you will see, that the Lord has not forgotten the case of backsliders, nor neglected to provide for it, nor mistaken their feelings. He who knows the heart, knows its bitterness ; and where strong encouragement is wanting, he has given it—“Return unto the Lord.

and he will have mercy upon you, and to our God, for he will multiply pardons." *

Think of the cases of David and Peter. Especially study Peter's case—Read the account of his fall—then see our Lord's warning to him beforehand, and how he had "prayed for him, that his faith" (though thus severely shaken) "should not *fail*;" † but that his fall should be overruled for good, and that when he was restored, he should be employed to "strengthen his brethren." Look how our Lord did restore him, in the last chapter of St. John's gospel. And then read his first epistle, and see to what a heavenly state of mind he was brought in his latter life. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous," and His intercession is irresistible, and "his blood cleanseth from all sin." ‡ And it is one special branch of his office as our Shepherd, (which he so tenderly and effectually executes) to "restore our souls," to "bind up that which is broken, to strengthen that which is sick, to bring back that which is gone astray." § Pray to him—"Cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved." || Attend the means once more. "Faith cometh by hearing." I remember when you and I were content to come shivering to the school-room on a Sabbath morning before it was light in the winter, that we might hear the word of God. I hope we may yet meet there again before we die; and that the Lord may so restore you by his grace, and "keep us both by his power through faith unto salvation," that after death we may meet in that "Rest, that remaineth for the people of God," and sing his praises, "who loved us,

* Is. lv. 7. M.R.

† Luke xxii. 31, 32.

‡ 1 John ii. 1; i. 7.

§ Ps. xxiii. 3. Ez. xxxiv. 16.

|| Ps. lxxx. 19.

and washed us from our sins in his own blood." To him be everlasting glory and praise !

Your affectionate,

J. T. N.

LETTER IV.

ON FALSE VIEWS OF THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

Aug. 18, 1824.

MY DEAR SIR,

My troubling you with this letter will perhaps appear like importunity. But I cannot avoid feeling an affectionate concern for you under your present afflicting circumstances, and an earnest desire to suggest anything, which experience leads me to conclude may apply to your spiritual state.

As a Minister, I was gratified, in the short conversation we had last night, to observe that your mind had in some measure, felt the burden and guilt of sin : because every man, who has had the least experience, or made the least observation on a real spiritual change of mind, must know, that *a deep conviction of the guilt of sin is one of its most striking and distinguishing symptoms.*

Suffer me, however, to guard you against such a reliance on the ordinance of the Lord's Supper for removing those painful feelings, as the nature of that ordinance by no means warrants. A mistaken reliance on the Lord's Supper—considering it as a saving ordinance, and as making our peace with God—is a common and most delusive error.

The Sacrament (in partaking of it,) is an expression of dispositions of mind towards God *previously* formed and *felt*, and which in that Sacrament are called into exercise. The principal of these dispositions are repentance, faith, and gratitude.

In agreement with this view of the ordinance, the Church directs those, who are about to partake of it, to ‘examine themselves, whether they repent them truly of their former sins, and have a stedfast faith in God’s mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his death,’ which will shew itself in a new life, and in love to man for God’s sake. *

Now if there be this repentance, it will not only shew itself in warm feelings at the time of receiving the ordinance, but it will be an abiding and increasing disposition of the heart. Sin will appear more sinful, the longer it is considered, and the more a man dwells upon the view of his past life. And he will endeavour to recal it to his mind, on purpose that he may be thus affected. This has been the impression made by a sense of sin on the holiest men. Thus Job said—“I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” † Hezekiah—“I shall go softly all my days.” ‡

If then there has been real repentance felt in partaking of the Sacrament; its reality will appear by the mind being led into deeper and more habitual views of its own sinfulness, and a progressively tender and penitent concern on account of it.

Again, the Sacrament is expressive of a reliance on the death of Christ for the pardon of our sins, and a thankful remembrance of it, as having obtained that pardon.

If we have really felt this reliance and this thank-

* Catechism.

† Job xlii. 6.

‡ Isaiah xxxviii. 15.

fulness, it will, like repentance, be continually on the increase. If a man has inwardly and heartily 'fed on the flesh of Christ by faith with thanksgiving,' * he will be continually applying by prayer to God for the same spiritual food ; because nothing but the continual remembrance of the death of Christ can keep up the sense of pardon in the soul ; and a sinner, who is hungering and thirsting after the forgiveness of the Gospel, can no more be satisfied with the assurance of forgiveness on one single occasion, than the bodily appetite can be satisfied with a single meal. It is Christ, on whom we are to depend, as answering the *continual* wants of the soul ; and not the ordinance, as an *occasional* excitement and expression of our feelings.

Allow me to entreat you to be earnest and frequent in prayer, that God would give you his Holy Spirit, which he has promised to them that ask, and that he would give you clearer views on a subject entirely new to your mind ; that he would deeply affect your heart with a sense of your great need of pardon through the Redeemer's blood, and with gratitude for an offer of pardon so purchased and procured : and that he, who alone *can*, will give you faith to receive that pardon, and to persevere in reliance upon it. I should strongly recommend your reading (or having it read to you) as frequently as practicable, the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah.

I remain, my dear Sir,

Your affectionate,

J. T. N.

LETTER V.

MY DEAR MADAM,

You were observing to me the other day, how very strong and express are the Lord's warnings by the prophet Ezekiel, to spiritual watchmen and shepherds. I find it indeed, very difficult to suppose that I have delivered my own soul in this particular, and am sensible that I am very far from "warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that I may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."* I am satisfied that this is my duty. For if even Christians *in general* are enjoined to "exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day;" † how much more is it the duty of the *Minister* of Christ to watch over, and study the spiritual benefit of those, who are committed to his charge. It is clear that no persons are exempted. The Ministry of the prophet was not confined to "warning the wicked to depart from his wickedness;" but he was equally to warn the righteous man not to depart from his "righteousness." ‡ And the Apostle under the Gospel extends and applies this general command to a great variety of persons. The believer is to be exhorted to "be a follower of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises." § "He who thinketh he standeth," is to be cautioned to "take heed lest he fall." || And all professing Christians are enjoined to "examine themselves, whether they be in the faith, and prove their own selves," to ascertain whether indeed "Jesus Christ be

* Col. i. 28.

§ Heb. vi. 12.

† Heb. iii. 13.

‡ Ez. iii. 16—21.

|| 1 Cor. x. 12.

in them," and "that they may not lose the things they have wrought, but may receive a full reward."*

This I conceive to be the spiritual husbandry, in which we as ministers of Christ are engaged. We agreed, I remember, my dear Madam, a little while ago, that it was promised, the trees of the Lord's planting should "bring forth more fruit in their age."† And that when he afflicts, he is using the pruning-knife, and purifying them, "that they may bring forth more fruit."‡ Allow me therefore to consider your present indisposition, as a special call upon me—"watching for your soul, as one that must give an account"—to endeavour to speak a word in season; and beside the general statements of Gospel truth, to attempt an observation or two on the particular improvement to be made of the Lord's chastening. Jeremiah says—"Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord."§ I could have wished indeed, if it had been the Lord's good pleasure, that this had been undertaken by abler hands; for it is very contrary to my wishes to seem to appear "wiser than the aged," knowing my own great infirmities. But as you are unacquainted intimately with any other Minister, I shall endeavour to speak a word, as the Lord may enable me, in dependence upon his blessing.

I conclude that the state in which all Christians desire to be, is that described in Luke xii. 35, 36. "Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open to him immediately." This is what I desire to have con-

* 2 Cor. xiii. 5. 2 John 8.

† John xv. 2.

‡ Psalm xcii. 14.

§ Lam. iii. 40.

stantly in view myself; and this is what I would wish for all who are dear to me.

Now in order to this, it seems necessary, that we should have a *distinct view* of the saving truths of the Gospel, and an *habitual hold* upon them; so that when the mind is perplexed, we may not merely hope in general that all is right, but may have some scriptural, and experimental grounds, to which we may habitually resort, to ascertain that we are in the faith, and that that faith is working by love to God, and to man.

Now with a view to ascertain this point, it appears advisable to go to the beginning, and ask ourselves—“Have I been thoroughly convinced that I was by nature blind and ignorant of God, and that I must have continued so, but for the grace of God; having no power or inclination to become acquainted with Divine truth, but a disrelish and aversion from it? And if “I was once blind,” what is my ground for supposing that “now I see?” that my “eyes have been anointed with the heavenly eye-salve”—the unction of the Spirit—so that I may comfortably hope, that I “see the things which belong to my” eternal “peace.”

In endeavouring to commence and pursue such an examination, it may be desirable to ask—“*What is a believer?*” He is one, who, being convinced by the Holy Spirit of his utterly lost and condemned state by sin, has come (under the influence of the same Spirit) to Christ, with a full persuasion that none can save him in heaven or earth but he; and that he both can and will. In this persuasion he has come to him, and continues to come to him, notwithstanding all discouragements; and he manifests his regard for the favour by a regulation of his life, tempers, and behaviour agreeable to his commands and example.

“ Do I then, (the self-examiner must ask his own soul) do I thus come to Christ under a full persuasion, that I am utterly lost without him ; that I am in myself wretched and miserable ; that so far from being “ rich, and increased with goods ” by all my reading, hearing, praying, and obedience, all these can never prove that I am in a safe state, except “ I win Christ, and am found in him, not having my own righteousness, but that which is by the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith ? ” * I can never hope to arrive at a state, when I may say, that “ I have attained, or am already perfect.” But I must cease from all dependence on past experience, and “ look to the things which are before,” “ and have my eye upon the unattained (as yet) and invisible prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” †

Have I then, in consequence of these views, committed my soul into his hands again and again ? and can I leave my soul in his hands, “ knowing whom I have believed, and persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day ? ” ‡

But how may I judge of the reality of this faith, and that I do not deceive myself with supposing that I believe, when I do not ?

Now I need not necessarily question my faith, or doubt its reality, because it is weak, provided it be *simple* and *sincere*. God does not “ despise the day of small things ; ” § nor will Christ “ break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.” || He is well-pleased with that prayer—“ Lord ! I believe ; help thou mine unbelief ! ” ¶ Though sin, or unbelief may sometimes prevail ; yet if it be habitually resisted—not

* Phil. iii. 8, 9.

§ Zech. iv. 10.

† Ib. verses 12—14.

|| Matt. xii. 20

‡ 2 Tim. i. 12.

¶ Mark ix. 24.

indulged, then, “though we fall, we shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord is upholding us with his hand.”* But if there is a want of *simplicity*, so that, though we sometimes seem to depend on Christ, at other times we depend on our present feelings, and can be easy without going to him for help, strength, and life; then we have reason to question our faith; for faith has only one object, and that one object is Christ; and he who walks by faith walks with Christ continually in view. Or if there is a want of *fidelity* and *sincerity*, in striving against those things which are displeasing to him, we have good ground to suspect the reality and soundness of our faith. If there is a truce or agreement made, either expressly, or silently, with any one sin, so that we are come to the point of saying—‘I have done all I can against that sin, and I can do no more’—this is almost denying that there is any such thing as faith. Faith is dependence without any limits on Christ for salvation, and for “all things pertaining to life and godliness.” He does not indeed see fit to make all his people at once victorious over every sin, or all of them in the same degree. But even while the contest is depending, and “iniquities” may at times “prevail;” yet still even at this time, faith, if it be put forth into exercise, deserves to be called a victory; † because in fact it is victorious over unbelief and despondency. The believer can take his worst sins, his daily sins, his easily-besetting sins, to the crucified Redeemer, and find that “his blood,” received by faith, “cleanseth from them all.”‡ He can “thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”§ “The strength

* Psalm xxxvii. 24.

† 1 John i. 7.

† Psalm lxxv. 2.

§ Rom. vii. 25.

of sin"—says he—"is the law; but Christ hath redeemed me from the curse of the law, being made a curse for me:" therefore "sin shall not have dominion over me," so as to condemn me; "for I am not under the law, but under grace." *

Again—faith is a victory, as respects the struggle against our sinful habits; for its strength in the Lord is never overcome. It may be at the end of its present supply. But though that may occasion a temporary defeat, it will never bring the *war* to an *end*, so long as the believer knows, that "underneath him are the everlasting arms; that the Lord, the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary; there is no searching of his understanding." † Being "risen with Christ, and his life being hid with Christ in God, he will set his affections on things above, not on things on the earth," and will proceed, by the fresh supplies of that life, to mortify all that is earthly and carnal in him. ‡ He cannot extirpate it, but he never gives it rest. This "old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin should be destroyed, that henceforth he should not serve sin." §

Thus, my dear Madam, I have attempted to set before you some of those truths, with which I am wishing to have a more experimental acquaintance myself. And thus I may probably endeavour, so far as the Lord shall enable me, and you find it profitable, to act occasionally the part of a 'Christian remembrancer,' by recalling those observations on paper, which we may at other times have made together, or by recurring to those grand truths, on which we must build all our hopes.

Believe me, your most affectionate,

J. T. N.

* 1 Cor. xv. 56. Gal. iii. 13. Rom. vi. 14. † Deut. xxxiii. 27. Is. xl. 23.

‡ Col. iii. 1—5.

§ Rom. vi. 6.

LETTER VI.

Uxbridge, August 25, 1830.

Well, my dear Madam, I hope the Lord may be leading you nearer to himself. The closer and more continual the communion between him and our souls, the more our happiness will be increased. Heaven itself is only a more perfect state of communion with God; and as we draw nearer to Heaven in point of time, it is of the greatest importance both to our safety, and our comfort, that we should get more experience of the employments and enjoyments, which we expect to partake of in that blessed world. The apostle says of himself and the Christians to whom he was writing—"Our conversation is in Heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be like unto his glorious body, according to the mighty working, whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself." *

He only can carry us on step by step towards Heaven; and he only can carry us on from one degree of preparation to another, till he has thoroughly made us acquainted with what he has done for our souls; and till we have a constant, habitual, delightful persuasion, 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." †

* Phil. iii. 20, 21.

† Rom. viii. 38, 39.

And as we were taught in infancy, that we cannot do these things of ourselves, without the special grace of God ; our one great object should be to wait on the Lord in a praying frame of mind ; listening to the voice of the Spirit ; pondering the sweet invitations of Scripture ; and watching against every thing in the way of worldly thoughts, and worldly conversation, which would draw away our hearts, and distract our thoughts from thus waiting upon God, and from the delightful privilege of communion with him.

All depends upon that new birth, or new creation of the Spirit of God, which I have repeatedly endeavoured to set before your mind, and to draw your serious attention to it.

The Holy Spirit, who accomplishes this new birth, or new creation, is for that reason called in one of our creeds, the Lord and *giver of life*. Till we are quickened, and made alive by this Spirit, we remain “ dead in trespasses and sins :” and where he has given this life, he will go on to give more and more of it, till he has made us capable of enjoying the “ Inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.”

It is to cherish the movements, and to desire and pray for the increase, of this spiritual life, that the Apostle particularly directs the attention of Christians. “ If any man ”—says he, “ have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God. Ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God ; and if children, then heirs ; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together ”* It is by the life and

* Rom. viii. 9, 14—17.

power, which the Spirit gives in this new birth, that Christians are enabled to believe in Christ, as our Lord himself teaches us. "He," (that is the Spirit) "shall glorify me, for he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you."* And those who believe, are said to be "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."†

And where the Spirit, as "the Lord and giver of life," has imparted this life, he continues to supply it. He who at first glorified Christ to the soul, when we were first enquiring—"What shall I do to be saved?" goes on to reveal himself more and more to us, and shews him in more precious views to the soul, so that he becomes, as the Scripture speaks, "the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely."‡ It is "the Spirit, who enlightens the eyes of the understanding, that we may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."§ This life of the Spirit distinguishes the genuine Christian from the mere lifeless formalist, who is satisfied with "the form of godliness without the power," and from the enthusiast, who pretends to the life of the Spirit, when he has it not. The formalist is all for quiet; still as death in what regards the soul and the other world, only desirous to ask no questions, and to enter upon no examination. But not so the believer; he is jealous over his own soul with a godly jealousy, he cries to God to "search him and know his heart."|| And like an upright and sincere person, while he prays to be searched, he does continually search himself, depending upon God's help to enable him to do it effectually. He remembers that

* John xvi. 14.

Eph. i. 17, 18.

† Ib. i. 13.

‡ Cant. v. 10—16.

|| Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24.

the Apostle has enjoined those, who had been professed Christians for many years, to “examine themselves whether they be in the faith, and to prove their own selves.”* Thus also St. Peter admonishes his converts—“The end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.”† My dear Madam, may we be watchful, and always looking for the coming of our Lord, and “examining *ourselves, whether we be in the faith!*” May we daily “prove our own selves!” May we not be satisfied without “growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!” May we be “looking” every moment “for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour, Jesus Christ.”

I am, dear Madam,
Your affectionate servant and minister,
J. T. N.

LETTER VII.

Uxbridge, Sept. 6, 1830.

MY DEAR MADAM,

You have, I believe, been upon my mind, and in my heart, more than any other individual whom I left behind me. I feel towards you, in some measure, as towards a mother. If I had less regard, I should not feel so anxious. But I cannot but grieve, when I see you on the borders of the grave, starving your soul of the comforts of religion, to defend a notion you have,

* 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

† 1 Peter iv. 7.

(and a mistaken notion) of the doctrine of our church respecting regeneration. It would be easy to shew, that the mere form of doctrine which you endeavour to defend, you do not understand. But, after all, however, we may leave this point,—it is not the important point for *us*. The question is—not what may be the sentiments of our Church—but what the truth is according to Scripture. I hope, after ministering nearly twenty years in the Church of England, and studying her doctrines at different times for fifteen years before I entered the Ministry, I may claim to know something about them. And as to attachment to them—I believe the Church has not a much more attached minister within her pale. But I tell you, my dear Madam, that if you have nothing to depend upon for salvation, but your churchmanship, I would not have my soul in your soul's place for twenty thousand worlds. The question is—Have you been regenerated? and have you now, at this time, the Scripture proofs of being regenerated?

I feel determined, my dear Madam, on this occasion, the Lord helping me, to deliver my own soul. I have repeatedly hinted to you my apprehensions respecting some of your views, and the important consequences that belong to them, as far as I could, without appearing to be disrespectful. I beseech you, once more, as on my bended knees, that before you neglect what I say, you examine it carefully as in the sight of God, and with earnest prayer for his direction; so that when we shall meet in his presence, you may be able to say—‘Lord! this man urged me to the acceptance of certain truths, which he declared to be the truths of thy gospel; but I, having examined them, found them not to be agreeable to thy word; and that I did so, I appeal to Thee, the searcher of hearts.’

Now having premised this, I will tell you, why I apprehend that you are not new born of the Spirit. My references shall be to Scripture. But I might even refer you to the catechism, where we are told that baptism is an engagement to repentance and faith; and, consequently, where there is no experience of repentance and faith, there can have been no regeneration. Now I have never observed that deep concern in you on account of sin, nor that sense of your utterly lost state by nature through sin, which is described in Scripture as the character of the truly penitent: "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and mourn for him (that is Christ) as one mourneth for an only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for a first-born." *

Again—our Lord says—"Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of Heaven." † Now a child is teachable, sensible of its want of knowledge, and desiring to ask for more and more information continually. And, in all the examples of God's people in Scripture I see this disposition. David, in those Psalms which were written towards the close of life, is continually crying—"Lead me!—Teach me!—Give me understanding according to thy word!" If Paul thought it necessary to be pressing on for more knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, after he had been preaching the gospel for many years; ‡ I think it becomes you and me, at least, to shew the same anxiety, and to "fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should seem to come short of it." § In conclusion—I shall venture to say to you, what Paul said to

* Zech. xii. 10.

† See Phil. iii. 10—14.

‡ Matt. xviii. 3.

§ Heb. iv. 1.

those, who had long been good Churchmen, as they esteemed themselves, of the Church of Corinth, which the Apostle thought as good a Church as we think the Church of England ;—" Examine yourself, whether you be in the faith, prove your own self."* In one word, we are "ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead *be ye reconciled to God*. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." † Mrs. Nottidge unites with me in kindest regards. May it please the Lord that we may see you once more !

Affectionately yours,

J. T. N.

LETTER VIII.

TO ONE IN A PRECARIOUS STATE OF HEALTH.

MY DEAR SIR,

Though I cannot be without my anxiety about your bodily health, I feel (what every reflecting immortal must feel in a much stronger degree) a sympathetic desire to subserve, if I may, the composure and satisfaction of your mind, when pain and weakness, and the consideration of eternity—(near at all times, and often nearer than we suspect)—render attention to the materials of that composure and satisfaction more than usually seasonable and necessary.

To suppose that professed Christians, considered as

* 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

† Ib. v. 20, 21.

travellers towards eternity, are improperly employed, when conversing on the end of their journey, and the means of securing it, as well as of rendering the journey itself both safe and pleasant; is a solecism, which in any other journey would not be tolerated. You will bear me witness, that I have not been influenced by an over-hasty desire to intrude this subject upon you; and if at last I offer a suggestion or two upon it, I hope the period of our acquaintance may have led me so far into your confidence, that I may do so, without conveying an unfavourable impression of my judgment, or of my regard for yourself.

Taking this for granted, I shall speak plainly on a plain subject, in the full persuasion, that if my observations should not meet your approbation, they will yet be sure of your pardon and indulgence, on the ground of the intention which dictates them.

You and I, my dear Sir, were born in a land, where the Christian religion is the professed religion of the inhabitants; and we were both taught from our infancy, that to believe the truths of that religion, and to respect its institutions, was our bounden duty. But all this could of itself never make the religion intelligible to our minds, or consolatory or interesting to our hearts. If we were to ask the thousands, who have nothing more than this educational influence of religion upon their minds—‘Is your religion intelligible to you? Is it interesting to you? Is it a guide in the smoother path of life? Is it a support in trouble? Is it a compensation for suffering? Does it give a hope full of immortality?’ We know—observation and former experience *compel me* to know—that every such individual must answer in the negative. Should we go further, and ask the studious and thoughtful—‘Are you satisfactorily persuaded of the truth of Re-

velation? Have you examined the evidences of the genuineness and authenticity of the books, till your mind is convinced?—or should we ask any—‘Have you examined the principles of the Bible; and do you find it a consistent whole; and that it explains the phenomena of human nature around you, and meets and removes the difficulties and perplexities and events of your own mind?’ ‘No, no, no,’—must be the answer. Perhaps many would go further, and own, what all the rest would own, if they spoke out—‘We have been taught that—it is true. We have heard the meaning of it explained according to the views of our authorized instructors. But the more we have heard, the less we understood. What we hear is indeed calculated to make us very easy about futurity. But then if we turn to the book, and read for ourselves, we cannot be satisfied, that this interpretation agrees with its simple obvious meaning. We wish we could either know more of it, or be satisfied we know nothing at all.’

Such was for many years of my life, my own habitual state of views and feelings; drowsy for the most part, and producing no effort to emancipate myself, except when some enfeebling illness, or piercing disappointment made me tremble at the unsettled state of my mind, and long for a source of satisfaction, that no human being could either give or take away. On the one hand, I found, that the general strain of preaching, writing, and conversation on religious subjects was calculated, as I have observed, to take away all anxiety. But then I found that it was done, not by unfolding the meaning of the Scriptures, but by explaining it away altogether. And it really would not satisfy my understanding in such circumstances to be told, that the Rev. Messrs A. B. and C. say thus, and that D. D. and Professors E. and F.

are of the same opinion. I found that the Bible in their hands, was indeed deprived of its power to alarm. But then it was by a process, which reduced it to a dead letter, and which equally took away its power to instruct, to cheer, and to satisfy. Here was a book written respecting all the present interests, and future destiny, of man ; which they assured me proceeded from the inspiration of Omniscience, and the authority of Omnipotence ; in which however, according to their interpretation, I could discern no leading principle as in every other science, to throw light upon the detail of it : and the non-agreement of their interpretation with the facts of daily occurrence around me was as palpable, as a denial of the circulation of the blood would have been in the human physiology.

On the other hand, I found this customary and prescriptive interpretation was loudly condemned by many, who brought me numerous and strong arguments against it, and very forcibly defended their own different views and interpretations. Still I found that I was for sometime far from satisfied. I saw that the Bible, if it was any thing, was intended to influence, and would influence, the heart and the conduct ; and I found that with many of my new interpreters, there was not all the influence visible that I expected ; with many of their followers less. ‘What must I do ? must I despair of satisfaction altogether ?’ In answer to that sort of perplexity, there was this consideration. The book stands upon its own authority as a Divine revelation, and must be examined by its pretensions to that character. If a sober and persevering perusal of it justifies its claims to my approbation, and fulfils the expectations it has excited, I shall have the satisfaction I am in search of, independent of all human opinion

It has been the employment of my life (though in an interrupted and desultory way, which I deeply lament) to search the materials of Scripture, and to bring them to the test of fact and experience; and the result is in the highest degree convincing to my understanding, and satisfying to the desires, which prompted the enquiry. I do find a stability, clearness, and comfort, which no other mental pursuit ever yielded. When stripped of disguising explanations, I see that it has leading principles, which explain its own more detailed parts, as the principles of a well-arranged science should do: and that these principles manifest their presence and action throughout all human nature, as clearly and universally, as the gravitation and other properties attributed to matter, do throughout inanimate nature. I see and experience that the power and agency attributed to the glorious and distinguishing truths which revelation contains, when its declarations are cordially received and believed, are as infallible and uniform on the understanding, heart, and conduct, as any of the most known results of the chemical combination of different substances. I allude more especially to the doctrines of the corruption of human nature, the atonement offered by the Son of God for sin, and the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit—which it is the great labour of most divines, either to keep out of sight, or—when the increasing tendency of the present age to reflection and investigation will not permit that—to explain them away, and dispose of them a little more circuitously, but (where it gains credit) with equal and fatal effect. Whether a cannon is buried or spiked, it is equally powerless; and whether a man be stabbed or stifled, he is equally out of the way. In whatever stage of the investigation of truths, inseparably con-

nected with your present and everlasting happiness, this letter may find you, I know not. But I know that in proportion as you are advanced in that investigation, my suggestions will approve themselves to your judgment, and tally with your experience. At all events, my only and concluding request cannot fairly be impeached of folly, or indeed of disagreement with any intelligent examination of religious truth whatever. I entreat you to take all the opportunities that your present state of health admits, and indeed in considerable measure secures, of examining the Scriptures with a sense of your responsibility to their Divine Author, and with constant prayer to Him, for direction and instruction, who both inspired the book, and endowed you with the precious gift of reason, that under the teaching of his Spirit you might understand it, and "be made wise unto salvation." Sweep your mind of all human interpretation; of all you like and all you dislike in human schemes of doctrine, and I shall be surprized, if even in a few weeks you do not see and feel something as different in the Scriptures from what you ever have yet seen, as a man who opens his window upon a beautiful, varied and boundless prospect at sunrise does, from the dark monotony which met his eye, when turned in the same direction at midnight. May God Almighty guide and bless you.

Believe me, my dear Sir,

Faithfully and affectionately,

J. T. N.

LETTER IX.

TO A YOUNG PERSON IN AN UNDECIDED STATE.

MY DEAR ———,

We are pressed beyond what our strength is capable of accomplishing, by the demands of the people for spiritual attention, to whom we have solemnly pledged our exertions. And when we have a few minutes leisure, we are very much puzzled what to say in your case. We fear your heart is yet wavering (you desire to be spoken to plainly and faithfully) between God and the world. And till this great point is decided, it is quite premature to discuss the subject of the sacrament. Have you, my dear ——, taken up the cross to follow your Redeemer? If you have, I know not what difficulty you should have in complying with our Lord's endearing command to "Do this in remembrance of him"—*of his death*, to which the believer is trusting for the entire blotting out of sin, and complete reconciliation with God—and *of His Exaltation* and intercession, to apply the benefits of his precious death to every soul that seeks Him.

If you have ever thoroughly apprehended what those benefits are, you are determined to seek them, till you are made partaker of them. Nothing else will or can supplant them in your thoughts, or overweigh them in your estimation. If you know their value, you will (you cannot help it) "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord." But how can your mind be duly impressed with the desirableness of that, of which you have never accurately estimated the value?

Then there is another important view of the subject, but equally dependent upon the enlightening of the mind to discern spiritual things in their true nature and value; and that is, the persuasion, which arises in the heart, (in consequence of a believing acknowledgment and acceptance of Christ in all his saving offices) that "he is able to save" and will save "to the uttermost," and carry through all dangers and temptations; and land the believer safe in his everlasting kingdom. This produces "Hope that maketh not ashamed," and is accompanied with "the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost."

But fear, or "the desire of the slothful, that killeth him,"* will never produce this reliance on the Redeemer, nor that hope of future glory. Such fear and such desire only suggest,—'This and this is my duty, and I shall be lost everlastingly, if I do it not.' But they give no delight nor confidence, they only leave the mind hesitating between duty and temptation, between God and Christ on one side, and self and the world on the other, without any strong motive to make an unhesitating choice, and to render the most difficult consequences of that choice delightful. Once more, yea I hope a thousand and a thousand times more go to him, who has promised, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out," and entreat him to take full possession of your heart, and to manifest himself to the eyes of your understanding in all the claims which he has to your eternal and unceasing gratitude, and all that unquestionable superiority, which he possesses over created comforts of any description.

Consider yourself, dear —, in the state of a person who, for want of examining his accounts, is drawing nearer and nearer to ruin by rapid strides, every

* Prov. xxi, 25.

week and every day : and whose indolence and neglect is the more unpardonable, because there is nothing more necessary than a moderate habitual attention, to retrieve his affairs, and put him in possession of an income adequate to every demand, and a future inexhaustible reversion. But there is a languor, that the very sight of neglected accounts inspires, and particularly neglected spiritual accounts, that makes the heart sicken at the thought of a *thorough* search. We can take ten times the trouble in partial, insincere, ineffectual measures. Set yourself, dear ——, to honest self-examination, and devote to it the time that you can perfectly call your own, without any intrusion upon paramount obligations. You must do this, or you cannot be happy ; and if the distant prospect (and we do not know that it is distant) of eternity will not prevail ; remember—without determined self-controul and exertion, you will soon be irrecoverably uncomfortable in this life. Your habits will be so fixed, that it will be impossible to break through them. You will become hardened in the custom of wounding conscience every hour of every day, and of indulging desponding thoughts in the retrospect of what you have done, and equally hardened in the indulgence of a complaining tone, which will infect every utterance of your feelings. For in that state of heart what can you express, if you express any thing, but woe ? And why will you throw away the happiness both of time and eternity, when a few months, perhaps, of self-denial would make what is now most irksome productive of present habitual comfort ; glowing in your heart, shining in your countenance, and adding to the comfort of all who are connected or associated with you ? I do not wish to tire you. But if you think it will be of any use for me to write a little more particularly

upon a few points, that require the attention of a young person of your age and state in society, who wishes to live the life of a follower of Christ. I will endeavour to write, if I hear from you that it will be agreeable. I feel more interest in your welfare than I can easily tell you.

Yours affectionately,
J. T. N.

LETTER X.

TO A YOUNG PERSON IN ANXIOUS ATTENDANCE ON HIS
FATHER'S DEATH-BED.

MY DEAR —,

We are truly concerned to hear of Mr. —'s illness, and request you will tell him, it will indeed be a very sensible satisfaction to us, to receive more favourable tidings of the state of his health.

You ask what I can recommend to him, that may probably be both acceptable and profitable during his illness. Of human compositions I do not know perhaps anything, much better than the little work you have mentioned.*

Of the different parts of Scripture, you intimate, that Mr. —, is not partial to reading the epistles of St. Paul. Well! you have the whole range of the Gospels, the Acts, and the Evangelical Prophet Isaiah. If Isaiah xl. and many following chapters, and particularly the fifty-third, were carefully read by yourself, with earnest affectionate prayer for the Holy Spirit's

* Serle's Christian Remembrance.

blessing and direction, in applying it to your own heart, and in reading passages to your father, with here and there an artlessly serious remark, warm from your own experimental feelings ; you would probably not repent of such a disposal of your time. The concluding verses of Matt. xi. Many passages in St. John's gospels and epistles, particularly in the gospel chap. i. iii. vi. x. xiv. xvii.

But remember, what self-denial and self-command, what deference and cheerfulness, and what incessant recourse to the throne of grace in private it requires, to make any suggestion, which must necessarily wear the appearance of seeming to direct and to instruct, —welcome from a child to a parent ! If your feelings are the yearnings of a soul quickened by the Spirit of God, over an immortal being like yourself, endeared by a peculiar relation in this mortal state, you will not shrink from exertion, perseverance, and self-denial. You will feel a delight in it, and the occasion may act both as a valuable test of your own spiritual state, as to faith and love to the Saviour ; and a powerful incentive to seek more abundant supplies of them.

Your affectionate,

J. T. N.

LETTER XI.

TO A FATHER ON THE SUBJECT OF CONFIRMATION.

MY DEAR SIR,

A dispatch from your young people speaks of an approaching confirmation. We are now in the midst

of preparation for Confirmation here ; and L. has sent them a few thoughts in print by a Clergyman on the subject, which we have found useful among our young people here.

As my thoughts have been very much drawn to the subject, I scarcely feel warranted in allowing the packet to go, without suggesting to you, what I have found many parents here willing to listen to ; though it has rather broken in upon the indifference with which such things are usually gone about, and from which mankind are usually very unwilling to be awakened. But to your mind, habituated to reflection, I shall scarcely need to make any apology for simply suggesting this enquiry, which (from the indiscriminate, customary form that Confirmation usually takes) may have easily escaped your notice—‘Whether there is not a very thoughtless sacrifice often made of virtue and happiness (dependent as they are upon real, vital religion) by driving people in droves like sheep, merely because they are come to a certain age, to make a solemn declaration and promise, and to call God to witness as to the truth of what they are doing, when they have not even considered the plain meaning of the engagement ; and when in the great majority of instances, it is naturally impossible, that they should have any intention to fulfil it ?’

Is it reasonable to suppose, that your children have made that renunciation of the world, which one who had really made it describes as a *crucifixion* to the world ; or that they have that habitual command over every wrong temper and feeling, which the engagement implies ?

And if not—what upon the plainest principles of common sense is likely to be the result of going through the awful mockery of calling God to witness

an untruth? What opinion will it give them of religion? What idea of God? What of the importance of truth? What influence will it probably leave on that native simplicity (comparative at least), which is one of the most hopeful features of youth; upon their own habitual tranquillity and comfort, and consequently on their ability to promote yours?

Then—as they cannot be confirmed in Christian graces and dispositions, which they do not yet possess, nor in a determination which they have not made, will they not be confirmed in their present state, whatever it is? If they have been thought to be in a state to profess an unreserved renunciation of every thing within and around them, which is opposed to the love and will of God; surely they will not think it necessary to make any effort at improvement in self-denial or self-controul afterwards.

These few suggestions, which have been frequently present to my mind lately, on what appears to me a popular error of observable and palpable amount—will not, I think, appear to you to be wholly unfounded, whether viewed by you in the same light as myself or not; and will, at any rate, I am persuaded, be accepted with the real regard, with which I am, dear Sir,

Faithfully yours,

J. T. N.

LETTER XII.

TO A CHRISTIAN PERPLEXED BY SECTARIAN TEACHERS.

DEAR ———.

I have heard of your present perplexity, and have greatly desired to write you a few lines. May the Lord enable me to speak to profit! You say—‘If they are right, I have been wrong all my life.’ And when you complain, that ‘you know not what you believe, or what you ought to believe,’ you are told—‘That is just as it ought to be.’ I see an account of such teachers in Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians—“They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them.”* They are very anxious to have you join them; and in order that you may “affect” them, and be inclined, and in a manner compelled, to do so, they would “exclude you” from all that the Spirit of God and his Ministers have taught you. They would persuade you that your faith is nothing, and your experience nothing, in order that you may be obliged to come and beg at their door. You have no occasion to do so. I trust you have need only to recollect what the Blessed Spirit has taught you; and that you would then be meekly but firmly satisfied, that you are perhaps better able to instruct them, than they to teach you. You have been taught, that you are a sinner by nature and practice, and absolutely without hope in yourself of any thing but everlasting destruction. But you have been taught also by the same Divine instructor, to see that

* Gal. iv. 17.

God has revealed in the Scriptures of truth an all-sufficient Saviour, who hath suffered the curse, and fulfilled the demands, of the law for every one who believes in him. You have, I trust, been taught to do so, and as "a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus," he has sent the Spirit of his Son into your heart, that you might claim the privilege of a child, and call him—"Abba, Father." I suppose you do really know and believe this; and that you have been waiting on God in the believing use of the means of grace for more and more of the teaching of the Spirit.

And so, my child, if you thus will keep close to the word of grace and the throne of grace, and the sober Ministry of the gospel; if you will look on men as no more than men, and "stand fast in the liberty, wherewith Christ hath made you free;" you will by the Spirit's teaching in the means find you are increasing in peace, and light, and strength. But if you distrust what the Spirit has already taught you, and dishonour him by going to ask man's leave, and man's teaching how to know and believe what you know and believe already; what can be the consequence, but confusion and perplexity? You do not want to be taught any thing new, so much as to be shewn what you know already, and therein to abide with God. "Hold fast that thou hast:"* Only pray to have the Spirit's revelation of the Lord Jesus to your soul more and more extended and confirmed. Your mistake has been, not understanding the simple statement of the Word of God respecting the full, free, sure salvation by the Atonement, Righteousness, and Intercession of the Lord Jesus. And not having been established in the teaching of the Spirit, and the truths of the gos-

* Rev. iii. 11.

pel, you have always been liable to break off from what you did know, and leave your Divine teacher, to be taught by men. And if you persevere in that way, you will never know what peace or rest means. But if you search the Bible with prayer, and resolutely shut your ears to every quarter, but a stated sober Christian Ministry, you will find peace growing in your habitual experience. You will not want to know what other people think, but will "be ready always to give an answer to every one that asketh you, a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear,"* and yet with steadiness and confidence. This cannot be done without very constant study of the word. I say constant, daily study. If we neglect this, or do it without prayer, the Lord will let us feel that we have no strength nor establishment, but are "like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind, and tossed." †

I have not time to write any more now. But if you think I may suggest any thing for your help, let me know freely, and at full length.

Your affectionate minister,

J. T. N.

LETTER XIII.

TO A CHRISTIAN UNDER EXERCISE OF MIND.

November, 1834.

MY DEAR MADAM,

That my friend's letter should have proved interesting to you, is no small gratification ; and your wish to

* 1 Pet. iii. 15.

† James i. 5, 6.

preserve a copy of it, affords me the additional pleasure of making one. I cannot however enclose it, without availing myself of the envelope to add a word or two on the great absorbing subject of our Heavenly Father's loving correction of his children.

One has sometimes seen a father take up a little child, and hold him to a window, to see some animated spectacle, which was passing before that window. Had the child remained on the floor, he would not have been tall enough to have seen what he could perfectly command when lifted up; and he would have remained on a level with his playthings on the floor, and probably occupied with them, or the flowers on the carpet. But when once lifted up, and his eye caught by the dazzling and bustling excitement, how his attention is rivetted; how entirely he forgets his playthings; how insensible is he even to the common calls of joyous interest.

Now, my dear Madam, just in the same way has our Heavenly Father been lifting up you, and me, and my dear wife, in the arms of the Angel of affliction, to see what, if we had continued on the ordinary level, and amidst the every-day objects of life, we should never have witnessed. He holds us just in that position, in which we see comparatively but little of temporal things, but sufficiently above them, and withdrawn from them, to have an undistracted, unembarrassed view of the things that are unseen and eternal. We have now an opportunity of seeing those glorious and unspeakably important realities distinctly, and unobscured by other objects, which before, mixing with them in our reflections, disfigured their excellence, and deprived us of their influence.

One of the first things which we are thus privileged to see, without being interrupted by many thoughts

and occurrences which used to intervene, is *the book of God's love*—the Bible—that much—much misunderstood, much misrepresented book ; of which we are all such dull students, and which we have all so misapprehended, and into the spirit of which we shall never fully enter, until we come to know what the love of God is by experience in the world of light and love. But this we may see, that in all the mercy and goodness of God in nature and in providence, and in all the varied instances of them in our own lives, there never was any thing to be compared with the message of love and salvation through a crucified Redeemer. And if we have caught but a glimpse of the true character of this book, let us never again take it up with any other feeling than that of gratitude and delight ; praying that “the eyes of our understanding may be” continually “enlightened” by the power of the Holy Spirit, “that we may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.” *

The next thing we see is *the plan of Divine love*—

I have loved thee with an everlasting love ; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee” † God has, from the beginning of the world, been drawing one and another—yea, so many—that they are, collectively, “a multitude which no man can number, out of all people and tongues,” who were all, “by nature, children of wrath, even as others,” ‡ and bringing them to a saving knowledge of himself, “that they should be to the praise of the glory of his grace, who has made them accepted in the beloved.” §

The origin of this plan is from everlasting. The means of accomplishing it are the incarnation, life, death, and altogether the finished work of the Re-

* Eph. i. 18.

† Jer. xxxi. 3.

‡ Eph. ii. 3.

§ 1b. i. 6.

deemer, dying, rising, reigning, and interceding, and administering every thing in the scheme of Divine Providence for the accomplishment of the plan of love.

Now we have great advantages, when lifted up, and withdrawn from the world, for studying this plan in its development and execution : and for discovering love in those events, and that experience of our lives, in which before we should never have thought of looking for it. What but love struck Saul of Tarsus to the ground ?—Love, impatient to hear that word—“ Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do ? ”—Love, associated with infinite wisdom to know, that nothing but that infliction would draw forth that cry, and eventually yield the delight and the glory arising from Saul’s conversion ! What was it but love Divine, that suffered Peter to fall so awfully, when nothing else would cure him of presumption and self-confidence ;—that love, which “ prayed for him, that his faith should not fail ; ”—that love, which restored him when humbled, confirmed and kept him when restored, preserved him “ by the power of God, through faith unto salvation ; * and gave him meantime that sweet employment—“ Feed my sheep ; feed my lambs. ” † What but Divine love stripped Job of all his substance, and “ smote him with sore boils from head to foot ? ” ‡ And that too for the cure of *one, only one single* spiritual disease—*a mixture of self-righteousness* :—there was nothing else—for God had spoken of Job as “ a perfect man and upright, none like him in all the earth ; ” and he had challenged Satan to find a flaw in him.§ And there was nothing else to be found in him, but that he was righteous in his own eyes.|| But this was sufficient to rob God of the glory of Job’s salvation,

* Acts ix. 1—6.

‡ Job. ii. 7.

† Luke xxii. 31, 32, 54—62.

§ 1b. i. 8.

John xxi. 15—17.

§ 1b. xxxii. 1.

and Job himself of the happiness of it. And therefore it was love indeed, in the fullest and truest sense, that placed Job in such trying circumstances; that brought the design of the trial to such full effect. * that withdrew the chastening as soon as the effect was produced; and then “gave Job twice as much as he had before.” †

Then what preparation is here made, by our seeing the proceedings of Divine love with others, for our perception and sense of it in our own case. Who hath upholden us ever since we were born? Who hath said—“All things shall work together for good to them that love God?” ‡ Who has given us the faintest desire to love him, contrary to our natural feelings? Surely we had it not naturally. Surely we find it very difficult to prevail with our cold hearts to admit and welcome his love even now. And who then can have given the desire to love him? And who hath, or could keep it alive in the midst of constant opposition from our corrupt and fallen nature, but He “who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will?”

“He who spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us”—He who “was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, and not imputing their trespasses unto them”—He who sent these present trials, and measures them out to us day by day, and hour by hour: even by those hands, which were nailed to the cross—He it is who has thus lifted us up. Affliction is the instrument, but He is the agent. May we see ourselves, feel ourselves in his arms—“the everlasting arms beneath us, and the eternal God in Christ our refuge.” § And may his love in redemption, “shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit,” lead us to

* Job xl. 1-5; xlii. 1-6.

‡ Rom. viii. 28.

† Ib. xlii. 10-12.

§ Deut. xxxiii. 27.

look up from our happy situation in the arms of our loving Father, to his loving countenance, and breathe out a little of our mourning love in expressions of self-abasement, and tender sorrow, and grateful acknowledgments! And never again may we approach him in a spirit of bondage, but always under the teaching of "the Spirit of his Son sent into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father." Ever may he enable us to receive his gospel, as a little child receives any thing, and depends for every thing from and on its parent; not thinking of *giving* anything, but only of *receiving*. Indeed the whole tenor of the book of Divine love shews us, that he no more expects we should bring any thing to him to recommend ourselves, or purchase our salvation, than the mother expects the infant she is nourishing to pay for its food. While an infant, he smiles his gratitude; when he is become a man, he will manifest that gratitude more distinctly and substantially.

Thus we see John distinguishing between the little children and the young men in the Lord's family. But even with the little ones this is the first food—"Little children, your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake."*

Pardon this long epistle, and believe me,

Your faithful servant in the gospel,

J. T. N.

LETTER XIV.

Dec. 4, 1834.

MY DEAR MADAM,

As a fellow-sufferer with my dear wife in bodily health, and with myself in falling short of that full

* 1 John ii. 12.

frame of confidence in our adorable Redeemer, without which we cannot rest satisfied, you are often in my thoughts. I am not unfrequently pondering some materials, that—if the Lord should vouchsafe to bless them—might be in any way serviceable to withdraw that veil, which prevents your seeing, in its grace to your soul, and in its glory to his attributes—“the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.”

Look there, my dear Madam, steadily and perseveringly, instead of looking at yourself; and your distress will gradually give way. And if I say a word with reference to your dissatisfaction at yourself, it is only that I may take up the general subject just where it presses on your mind, and then employ that view of it, as a link to connect our thoughts and our feelings with the adorable Redeemer.

I would at once then ask,—Is not jealousy of ourselves a more hopeful symptom, than security of love to the Saviour? Is not the knowledge of what is in your heart, and how utterly void it is naturally of all love to him, and of the possibility of loving him, a better preparation for keeping up the desires of your heart after his grace, which alone can change it, and maintain the change; than setting out with mere warm natural feelings, which in time of temptation wither and vanish.

But in all this we are still short of our object, while we are looking at grace in ourselves, instead of grace in him; like Hagar, poring on the empty bottle, while we forget the inexhaustible fountain that is at hand. You may be deceived in looking at yourself, either in thinking that you have, or have not grace. But there is one thing in which you cannot be deceived, and that is—in “looking unto Jesus, the

author and finisher of our faith." * Had any person, or could any person have, the slightest desire to love him, except he had given it? And did he ever give this desire, and disappoint it? I must here stop to say, that in the usual way of endeavouring to comply with the exhortation of "looking unto Jesus," it is too common to expect affection to be excited, before attention is paid to what must precede it, and be the introducing cause of it—I mean an intelligent consideration of the qualities and excellences of Him, whom we contemplate, and desire to love. The mere name of Jesus will not produce this—no, nor his mere titles as a Saviour and Redeemer—no, nor the enumeration of what he has done to deserve our gratitude. It must be the result of examining the gracious characters of his relation to every one that is enquiring after his salvation—Not how lovely he is in worthiness, but how attractive in grace—especially in those graces, in which he exactly suits our wants.

Now this is no hasty work. We must be content to wait in the use of means, till he, who knows the best time and way, and is waiting to discover himself to those, now "sitting in darkness, and the shadow of death," shall be pleased to "arise upon the soul with healing on his wings." † "His going forth is prepared as the morning," ‡ for which we must wait; for nothing can hasten it. But then what a blessed and complete emblem this is! for neither can any thing retard it; no, not for a moment. "The vision," (by which is here intended the whole mystery of the Lord's dealings in accomplishing the salvation of his people), "is yet for an appointed time. But at the end it shall speak, and not lie." And shortly after

* Heb. xii. 2.

† Mal. iv. 2.

‡ Hosea vi. 3.

it is said—"The just shall live by faith."* This is one especial view of our great Surety, which it is absolutely necessary to have constantly in view—that in all things we must live entirely by faith : we must "walk by faith, and not by sight," or we can never be "confident." † Till we are satisfied that—"Come unto me, and I will give you rest," and—"Him that cometh I will in no wise cast off," ‡ will as certainly be performed, though we have not at present any sensible or discernible performance—till this is our persuasion, we have formed no adequate idea of his trustworthiness.

And do not mistake me here. I am not urging this on you as a test, which will shew you to be in a safe state, and the want of which should lead you to despond. Remember, the truth, that Jesus will save all who come to him, is as true before you believe it, as it will be afterwards ; and that he will therefore save thousands, who as yet have neither desire nor wish to be saved. But the case is this. Whatever comfort is to be derived from this truth ; you cannot have it, till you are persuaded of it ; that if you believe on him as the Saviour of every seeking sinner, he will save you ; he "has saved you, and called you," though at present you have no comfortable sense of it, but go mourning all the day long. Your interest then is not to consider how much it is your duty to believe in order to be saved ; but how desirable it is, that you should know so much of the Lord's loving-kindness revealed and proclaimed in his word, as to consider and examine the descriptions given of him with a sanctified and reflecting intelligence ; till you come to see, that he stands waiting and entreating you to accept that, which you think he is so unwilling to bestow.

Let us consider a few of the passages, exhibiting

* Hab. ii. 3, 4.

† 2 Cor. v. 7, 8.

‡ Matt. xi. 28. John vi. 37.

the Redeemer's disposition to those who seek him—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden." Who are the persons invited here, if you and I are not? 'But suppose I come, and am not accepted.' He had respect to such apprehensions, for he said—"Him that cometh, I will in no wise cast out." Can any fair exertion of ingenuity warp the sentiment here expressed from that meaning, which conveys the strongest ground for encouragement? 'But I find nothing in myself.' Did he bid us look for any thing there? 'But all is so dark, and so cold.' Yes, and so it was at five o'clock this morning. But that is no reason why the sun should not now be shining most cheerfully in my face while I am writing. And your not feeling the warmth of the Sun of Righteousness, is no reason why you should not hereafter rejoice in the brightness of his grace, and the warmth of his loving-kindness. Go on, my dear Madam, to "wait for him more than they that watch for the morning."* It is indeed a cheerless work. But it is an expectation, which never was cherished in vain.

"Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." The very "name of the Lord, who keepeth mercy for thousands," † ought to gain credit with us, and induce, as it justifies, patient waiting.

Meanwhile if he choose to magnify and endear his grace, by delaying the time of manifesting it, shall we therefore say—he has little regard for us or concern for our interest? And the period of waiting is by his management sanctified to strengthen faith, to stir up to more frequent and earnest applications to him, and

* Ps. cxxx. 6.

† Is. l. 10, with Ex. xxxiv. 5—7.

especially to call forth that most intelligent of all prayers, (for every one, who has most faith, will be most sharp-sighted to detect the unbelief that is mixed with it)—“ Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.” *

Shall we say, that his wisdom is not employed for us, as well as his love? I feel the more earnest desire to offer any remark, that might set this great truth in its true light; because I am naturally under the spirit of bondage, discouragement, and unbelief so powerfully, that I am obliged to get what Little I do get by hard fighting for it.

I think you would find in Rutherford's Letters some interesting experience of a mind “ fighting the good fight of faith, and laying hold on eternal life.” in spite of continually-returning misgivings.

But my own engagements and consideration for your patience, warn me to conclude;—earnestly commending you to the grace of our Lord,

Your faithful servant,
J. T. N.

LETTER XV.

Dec. 21, 1834.

. I shall now, in all dependence on the Lord's help, endeavour to offer a few suggestions, which may, by his blessing, illustrate an interesting part of the experience of a seeker after the salvation of Jesus. We must keep strictly to a simple view of the matter. His language is—“ Him that cometh I

* Mark ix. 24.

will in no wise cast out." Here is nothing said about any other mark or proof of grace, than such a belief of the truth of his invitation, and of his ability to save, as keeps the soul waiting upon him. It is written, "Blessed are they that wait for him."* But if I were to look for something to be wrought in me, before I believe that he receives me, this would not be faith, but sight. It is in the spirit of the Pharisees, who "required a sign."† The very essence of faith is to believe his word, his promise, his invitation nakedly, and without any thing else to depend upon. You see in Isaiah xxx. the Lord would do nothing for the people, till he had starved them out of all creature-confidence, and made them wait on him. "Their strength is to sit still."‡ So Rom. iv. 5., "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that *justifieth the ungodly*, his faith is counted for righteousness."

I acknowledge that many of the Lord's people set out with this expectation; but he never gratifies it. "He waits to be gracious; and he will be exalted" by having his bare word believed and rested upon, before he will gratify their expectations. A jealous regard to his own honour requires this. For you would hardly think it respectful even to the claims of an honest servant, to say—"I will believe that person as far as I can see him, and no farther." And his faithfulness to us requires the same thing; for if he suffered us to build ourselves up on something we find wrought in ourselves, we should (as he knows) be building on a foundation, that would not stand: and while we profess to be trusting in him, we are indeed doing so no farther than his word is countersigned by our experience. But waiting on his bare word honours

* Isaiah xxx. 18.

† Matt. xvi. 1.

‡ Isa. xxx. 7.

him ; and he will honour it. Waiting for more grace will end in finding that, "he waits to be gracious : " and that he has no other object in determining to be "exalted" in this matter, than "that he may have mercy upon us."*

I feel that all this poor endeavour is that of a workman that "needs be ashamed." But I know "it is nothing with the Lord to save, whether with many or with few," † and that he can bless the feeblest efforts.

Your faithful friend and servant,

J. T. N.

LETTER XVI.

DEAR MADAM,

The weakness of your bodily health renders it impracticable, that I should have the pleasure of conversing with you on those invisible but glorious realities, to which our faith is directed. And I suffered my mind too easily to admit an habitual feeling, that there was no medium of communication left for us. Perhaps, however, I may, under your painful and suffering condition, be permitted and enabled by our gracious Lord, to drop a word or two in the form of a letter, which may be read (a few lines at a time) as you find your strength will allow.

Our gracious Lord, in the parable of the Shepherd and the lost Sheep, ‡ represents his own character as a Shepherd in a plain and simple, yet most encouraging, point of view. Of a sheep going astray, He says,

* Is. xxx. 18.

† 2 Chron. xiv. 11.

‡ Luke xv. 3-7.

“the shepherd goeth after it, until He find it.” But how far does the patience and perseverance of “the good Shepherd, who laid down His life for the sheep,” exceed the long-suffering and endurance of any other shepherd! How long does He follow His sheep, before they hear, and know His voice! How long has He been calling to us to stop, and leave the paths of vanity and destruction, and hear Him, and put ourselves under His care, that He may carry us to His fold, and make us happy in communion with Him here on earth—(such communion as David describes in Psalm xxiii.) and incomparably more happy in the communion with him above! But when He calls, and we are “*almost* persuaded” to stop that He may take us up, some foolish object, some amusing pursuit, which mocks our hopes with the deceitful appearance of gratification, draws us away from Him, and He is forgotten and lost sight of, perhaps for months, or years. Again, the Shepherd calls, and makes his voice heard, perhaps in His written word, perhaps in the preaching of the Gospel. Sometimes he sends after His sheep the angel of affliction, and while affliction is applied without, the *still small voice* whispers within, in the recesses of the heart and conscience, “Come unto me, and I will give you rest.” And the soul replies—“Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.”* The agreement seems actually entered into, for some time. It may be while the softening influence of affliction lasts, and the world and its impertinent and ensnaring temptations are kept at a distance, that the person thinks and feels, and acts as one who “has tasted that the Lord is gracious.” But again the heart wanders, and the good Shepherd is left. But He never gives up the pursuit. “He goes after it, un-

* Acts xvii. 23.

till He find it"—until there is no more evading Him. He exerts the outward dispensations of His providence, and the inward constraining sense of His love at the same time, till the soul becomes His willing captive—made "willing in the day of His power." * "And when he hath found it, He layeth it on His shoulders rejoicing." He does not say, as many, after a long and laborious search do say—"What an immense deal of trouble I have had! How much time I have employed in vain, before I could succeed!" Perhaps he has been going after His lost sheep forty, fifty, sixty, or seventy years in the wilderness. Meanwhile the poor silly sheep has been pleased with everything, rather than with the Shepherd; has hazarded every danger, rather than surrender itself to Him, and He has patiently endured all this, and at last takes the sheep into His care and charge, "rejoicing." And then we may observe for our unspeakable comfort—there is another thing He *does not* say: He does not say—"How worthless is this sheep! How utterly undeserving!" Not a word of this. It is all joy—"He layeth it on His shoulders rejoicing;"—and not only so—He tells it—His joy is too good not to be communicated, and He is too loving not to communicate it—"Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep! There is joy in heaven—through heaven—over one sinner that repenteth."

Now, my dear Madam, let us go back to the deep, immutable, unchangeable ground of all this. Why does He so love His sheep? Because "He laid down His life for them." Why does He draw them to Himself with the cords of loving-kindness? Because "He loved them with an everlasting love." † O then let

* Ps. cx. 3.

† Jer. xxxi. 3.

us say—"Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Put thy trust in God." And again—"He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him freely give us all things."* Let us never be discouraged at our own unworthiness. The Lord does not despise us on that account. Neither our fallen nature, nor a life of undervaluing and despising Him, can make Him neglect or despise us. You see Jer. xxxi. 18—20., that when the penitent is writing the most bitter things against himself, then the Lord is yearning over him with the greatest tenderness.

Thanks a thousand times.

Faithfully yours,

J. T. N..

LETTER XVII.

September 18, 1846.

DEAR SIR,

I have thought of you several times since I had last the pleasure of seeing you; and it will afford me very great pleasure, if I may be permitted, now that we are removed to some distance from each other, to assist your remembrance by the pen, with some of those blessed and sustaining truths of the Divine word, on which we lately conversed face to face. Well, my dear Sir, if we return to that blessed word, I have nothing new to say. Unhappy indeed would it be for us, if anything new need to be said concerning that "chief corner-stone," which God has laid as an all-

* Ps. xliii. 5. Rom. viii. 32.

sufficient foundation for our hope and our dependance : and of which he has already taught us, that “ he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.”*

We want nothing but to hear this over and over again, and to learn the sweet lesson of love, and gratitude, and comfort, which follow from believing it. If God manifested such love towards us, when in arms against him ;—if, when employing myself, my power, and my opportunities, in opposing and dishonouring him ; if, though he foresaw all this, he gave his only and well-beloved Son to die for me ; what can be so sure, as that I may depend on him to “ keep me by his power through faith unto salvation ?” It was more wonderful, that, while I was a determined enemy, he should provide such a redemption for me, than that, after he has redeemed me, and engaged to secure everlasting life, he should fulfil that engagement.

I desire to be kindly remembered. I am, dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

J. T. N.

* Is. xxviii. 16.

THE END.

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