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Thoughts for the thoughtful

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THOUGHTS

FOR

THE THOUGHTFUL.

BY

OLD HUMPHREY,

AUTHOR OF "OLD HUMPHREY'S ADDRESSES," "OLD HUMPHREY'S OBSERVATIONS," &c.

The Gothic arch, where ivy in its pride,
Clusters around the porch I dearly love;
There let me muse alone at eventide,
And thence my peaceful thoughts be borne above.

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PREFACE.

As an old man I may be allowed a little quaintness in giving a title to a book, and a considerate reader will not quarrel with me for choosing that of "Thoughts for the Thoughtful," inasmuch as it is the best that has occurred to my mind.

Some of the following pieces have already appeared in the "Tract Magazine;" and, indeed, the whole volume itself is of a very unpretending character, claiming no attention either for the novelty of its design, the brilliancy of its wit, the extent of its information, or the depth and solidity of its wisdom. But as we expect not the common architect to erect a pyramid, so my humble design may escape the censure of all who prefer usefulness to grandeur.

In thus collecting together a few of my fugitive thoughts, it has been my wish to excite the reflections, and call forth the thankfulness and kindheartedness of the thoughtful on a

variety of subjects, well worthy of more attention than I have bestowed upon them. He who duly considers what a minute speck deranges the clearest sight, and what a mere spark kindles a conflagration, will be careful neither to propagate error, nor to excite ill will. I hope my little book is consistent with truth, and I trust it is of a friendly spirit. If we wish for peace on earth before we enjoy it in heaven, the least we can do in the midst of our unnumbered infirmities is to foster grateful and kindly emotions; for it is only when the heart is full of thankfulness to God, and unfeigned love and charity to mankind, that we can reasonably hope "the wilderness and the solitary place" to be "glad," and the "desert" to "rejoice, and blossom as the rose."

OLD HUMPHREY.

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THOUGHTS

FOR

THE THOUGHTFUL.

A SWEET SPIRIT.

THERE is a sweet spirit,—not to be found every hour in the day, nor, indeed, every day of the year, but it is sometimes to be met with,—a spirit of forbearance, kindness, and charity, that delights to speak well of the absent, and to represent favourably what to others may appear doubtful. "She has a high way with her," said an Irish maiden, when speaking of her absent mistress, who was considered proud: "people do not understand her. She has a high way with her; but she is like the lilies, that are so gentle and mild when you come to know them."

Oh that we all had more of the spirit of this

female! that all our seeming highmindedness and pride could be explained in as satisfactory a manner, and that we were enabled to say of ourselves with perfect sincerity and truth, whatever may be our outward bearing, "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me," Psalm cxxxi. 1.

THE SUN AND THE CLOUD.

It is usually thought, and no doubt correctly, that in age our emotions are much deadened, but with regard to the outward things of creation mine appear to be as lively as ever. As I stood gazing on the western sky, the orb of day was setting gloriously. From a dark cloud that ensconced the sun, regular beams of light, widening in their course, shot upwards and sideways. So clear and bright was the firmament, that the tops of the far-removed buildings were clearly defined, and the flight of pigeons that with rapid wing were wheeling round in the air at the distance of a mile were distinctly visible. While, entranced with admiration, I continued to gaze at the kindling heavens, the sun

came forth from his hiding place in purple and gold, flinging upon earth and heaven such an intensity of brightness, and pouring forth such a flood of unendurable glory, that my hands clasped themselves involuntarily, and as I had no words that could relieve my heart and soul, I stood in silent ecstacy, my eyes overflowing with tears.

I know that clouds are sent forth from the Eternal on errands of extended usefulness; that the sun is the visible light and glory of the world, calling into existence myriads of God's creatures, and executing through the wide spread universe the Almighty will of his Almighty Maker; but I felt at that moment that the bright sun and the dark cloud had, also, another mission to execute; to entrance my eye with beauty and brightness, to impress my heart with a sense of God's glory and goodness, and to overwhelm my spirit with unspeakable wonder, gratitude and praise.

THE GOTHIC PILE.

I LOVE to walk in these gloomy cloisters, and to muse upon this Gothic pile, that for so many centuries has excited wonder. It is mouldering now,

and discourses eloquently on the fading nature of this world's most lasting glories.

> Lord, what is man! how frail and weak,
> How vain his worldly trust;
> The proudest effort of his hands
> Shall crumble in the dust.

Look at the sculptured portico, purely Gothic, nothing can be finer! It is as rich as age and elaborate carving can make it, from its pointed top to its substantial base. Regard the massy buttresses, and that goodly tower where unnumbered niches are filled with the effigies of saints, mitred bishops, grotesque figures, and curiously wrought ornaments—But let us enter the building.

See what windows there are of painted glass! what a spacious nave and what extended transepts! Mark how the clustered pillars shoot up to the fretted roof a hundred feet above us, and then what piles of monumental marble! The armed knights lying on their backs are sadly mutilated! Their helms and hauberks have been battered; their shields and gauntlets, and two-handed swords, have been broken, and the iron mace that once lay at the foot of yonder tomb has been taken away. These mutilated fragments bid us look upwards for immortality; for on earth we cannot find it.

Observe the galleries above, on double columns narrow and high, now seen, and now losing themselves in the thick walls of the building. In olden

times, dark-dressed nuns might be seen there, gliding to and fro in the dim light like flitting shadows, hasting to matins or vespers.

Here and there are flights of steps of black marble, leading to different chapels; for the church was a chantry endowed with revenue for priests to sing masses for departed souls, one of the many mummeries of Popery! The altar-piece is imposing, and the stalls of dark-brown wainscot also, with beautifully carved Gothic canopies, and seats with strange devices. But let us descend below.

This old crypt so rich in cobwebs and in carved work of the sculptor's chisel, looks a different place to what it did when its clustered pilasters and groined arches were lighted up with lamps hanging from the roof. There are no hooded friars now, kneeling in devotion, and "bidding their beads" before the costly crucifix. Time has been when this low-browed vault has dazzled the beholder's eye with all the glittering glory that could be imparted by richly-wrought vessels of the precious metals, by decorated altars, glowing paintings, coloured glass, and sparkling jewels. Where now we stand, bald-headed monks have stood before us, in grey gown and rosary, and mitred abbots habited in gorgeous apparel, in vestments of purple and crimson, stiff and glittering with silver and with gold. The place is at the present time

"Furred round with misty damps and ropy slime,"

and teems with unsavoury odours; but silver censers have ere now filled it with the perfume of frankincense and myrrh. It is now silent; but the sweet voices of the young, and the deep mellow tones of age mingled together, have rung in awful and mysterious melody through its echoing recesses, with the praise of the virgin, instead of the praise of the High and Holy One. With what a cloud of errors and delusions has Popery enshrouded the Christian profession! its indulgencies, confessions, penances, and purgatory, sealing the word of God, bowing down to crucifixes, and seeking the intercession of saints! How earnestly should we pray for the removal of these soul-deceiving delusions!

I love to walk in the gloomy cloister, and to muse on the Gothic pile; for it tells me what a frail worm I am. The bald-headed monks, and mitred abbots, where are they? and where shall I shortly be? The glowing paintings, the sparkling jewels, the gorgeous apparel, the silver censer, the perfumed incense, and the mingled voices of youth and age are gone; but their very absence teaches me to cling to things that are eternal, and to value more highly the simple and superlative excellence of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It tells me to seek treasures in heaven, it moves my heart to magnify the Lord, and my spirit to rejoice in God my Saviour, and in him alone.

THE BROKEN THREAD.

It is a bad sign when age is too proud to learn a useful lesson from childhood! If in my walks and friendly cottage calls, I can do any good to others, I am thankful; but the amount of my services is very small. Often, however, does it occur, that when I do no good to others, I get good to myself.

This morning, a little child, at a house where I called, came weeping to her mother in great grief. She had been sitting very quietly for some time, on a little stool, sewing at a piece of clean rag for practice. When I inquired the cause of her trouble, it was a broken thread: the poor little girl seemed overwhelmed with the conviction that all her work was at an end.

"Did you think, love, I could not fasten it on again?" asked the mother, wiping away the streaming tears. "Yes," sobbed the child. "Oh! but I can though, in a minute," said the mother. "See, love! see!"

Dear little child, thought I to myself, thy grief and thy simplicity are just like mine. How often and how long have I sat weeping and sobbing with, as it were, a broken thread in my hand, not considering how easy it would be to my heavenly Father to fasten all the broken threads, and to heal all the broken hearts of his children.

WANT OF FORBEARANCE.

For shame! for shame! Hasty, impatient, and petulant Christian! Was David the song of the drunkards? Was Elisha the derision of children? Was Paul called a madman? And must you hold up your head, forsooth, and feel indignation on account of a trifling injury? Do you profess to be a follower of your meek and lowly Lord and Master, and fly off in a tangent because a slight indignity has been put upon you? Go and ponder the words, "With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love," Eph. iv. 2.

Was righteous Abel slain? Was Daniel cast into the lion's den? Were those of whom the world was not worthy, sawn asunder? Was Stephen stoned to death, and the Lord of life and glory taunted, buffeted, spat upon, scourged, and crucified? and cannot you bear with an offending brother without giving way to anger, hatred, malice, and uncharitableness? For shame! for shame! Open your Bible, and let the following text be the subject of your meditations. "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses," Matt. vi. 14, 15.

Should it happen, reader, that you have a hasty spirit within your bosom, think not that my remarks are directed against your infirmity. No, no, not a word of it. The truth is, that my temper has been too easily ruffled, and every syllable I have uttered has been directed against the hot head and angry heart of Old Humphrey.

SO I TWISTED IT.

You will agree with an old man in the observation, That it is a pleasant thing to be in that delightful mood, wherein you seem to have the power of turning every thing to the best account. In such seasons, the earth is felt to be the Lord's, and "the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein," Psa. xxiv. 1.

A Christian friend who is often in this mood, has just given me an account of an evening party in the following words: "We stayed supper on the little island, having made a fire of sticks. I could not help thinking of St. Paul on the island of Melita, when the barbarous people showed him no small kindness, receiving him, and those with him, 'because of the present rain, and because of the cold.'

True it is, that there came no viper out of the heat; but that did not signify. After a while, the party began singing, all standing round the fire. They were singing, alas! not the praises of God, but I laughed in my sleeve, for *so I twisted it.*"

Oh that Old Humphrey could thus twist every word that comes out of the mouths of his fellow-sinners, as well as every thought that emanates from his own heart, to God's glory. This would indeed be acting up to the spirit of the text, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God," 1 Cor. x. 31.

HOW FAR IS IT TO CANAAN?

"How far is it to Canaan?" said a friend. "Why," replied I, "the children of Israel found it a long way; for they travelled forty years in the wilderness. The most important thing is to know that we are *in* the way, for then the distance will get less and less every hour."

"How far is it to Canaan?" asks the doubting Christian; "for I am sadly afraid I shall never get there. My sins are a heavy burden to me, and I

long to be rid of them, if, indeed, there is hope for such an one as I."

Go on, poor doubting Christian, take fresh courage, and quicken thy step. Canaan is not so far off but thou shalt reach it at last; and if thou couldst know how willing the Saviour of sinners is to receive thee, it would shed a sunbeam on thy dejected countenance. I have a word of comfort for thee, a cordial for thy heart:

"I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins," Isa. xliii. 25.

"How far is it to Canaan?" asks the triumphant Christian; "for I long to be at home. I know that my Redeemer liveth, and because he lives, I shall live also. My soul has made me like 'the chariots of Amminadab,' and I am impatient to behold him face to face!"

Go forward, triumphant Christian, with the glorious ring of assurance upon thy finger! Cast not away thy confidence, which hath "great recompence of reward." But stay, I have a word for thee, also, which may be useful. Ponder it in thy heart:

"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall," 1 Cor. x. 12.

"How far is it to Canaan?" inquires the afflicted Christian; "for I have lain a long while upon the bed of suffering. 'Wearisome nights are appointed to me' I am full of tossing to and fro unto the

dawning of day. 'Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then I would fly away, and be at rest.'"

Be of good cheer, afflicted Christian! The heavier the cross, the more pleasant will be the crown. If we suffer with Christ we shall be glorified with Christ. I have a word to refresh the fainting soul, and will now give it thee:

"The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us," Rom. viii. 18.

"How far is it to Canaan?" asks the persecuted Christian; "for I am an outcast from my family, a stranger upon earth; like my Lord, I am 'despised and rejected of men.' 'Many are they that rise up against me,' and 'they hate me with cruel hatred.'"

Hold on thy way persecuted Christian: it is a safe one, and a blessed one, yea, the one thy Redeemer trod before thee. Dost thou want a word of consolation? I will give it thee, lay it up in thy bosom:

"Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven," Luke vi. 22, 23.

"How far is it to Canaan?" sighs the bereaved Christian; "for I am a lonely and desolate pilgrim. All that were dear to me upon earth are taken away. My tears have been my meat day and

night, and my soul yearns for the land where there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying.

Pass on, bereaved Christian; the more lonely thy pilgrimage, the more pleasant will be the company of the "shining ones" that await thee, and the sweeter thy reception at the end of thy journey. The Lord whom thou seekest, hath a special care and pity for his desolate ones. Take these words with thee, and they may refresh thy spirit. For even though they be desolate—

"The redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away," Isa. li. 11.

"How far is it to Canaan?" asks the dying Christian; "for the swellings of Jordan are risen about my soul. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, 'and the terrors of death are fallen upon me.' Alas! I sink in deep waters: I shall not see the land that flows with milk and honey."

Look up, poor dying Christian; for yonder is the bright and morning star: thy night is far spent, and the day is at hand. Is thine arm too feeble to be put forth for the book of God, then I must even hold it up before thine eyes. Look on these words, and let neither flood nor flame affright thee; be of good courage, for they are the words of Him who has promised, when flesh and heart fail, to be the strength of thy heart, and thy portion for ever:

"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour," Isa. xliii. 2, 3.

THE RAIL-ROAD STATION.

I HAVE but just returned from the rail-road station, where every one I saw seemed to have ardour in his heart, and hurry in his eye. If we were half as much in earnest in preparing for heaven as we are for our jaunts of pleasure, and our journeys of business, it would be something! What a bustle pervaded the whole station! loading and unloading, running backwards and forwards, some going into the carriages, and others coming out, while the rattling vehicles set off and arrived by turns.

In the midst of all this bustle, I noticed a man walking coolly along with a tin pan in his hand, greasing the wheels of the carriages. He took no notice of the fine folk or the bustle: whoever and whatever the people might be, did not appear at all

to trouble his head: whither they came or went, was no business of his; on he went with his employment: it was his duty to grease the wheels, and grease the wheels he did.

Thinks I to myself, "Here's a lesson for me. This man is but a picture of what I should be." Oh that I had humility and godly integrity enough in my heart to go straight on with my work! "greasing the wheels," if needs be! patiently and cheerfully occupying the lowest station assigned me by duty, until it should be said unto me, "Friend, go up higher," Luke xiv. 10.

NOTHING AND SOMETHING.

Listen to an old man who, among the multiplicity of his words, may drop a few not undeserving your attention. Listen to an old man. There is no way of passing through this world in safety, without having the word of God before our eyes, and the grace of God in our hearts. If this be true, and undoubtedly it is, then the Word of God and the grace of God ought to be our daily delight.

Now, the word of God and the grace of God both instruct us, that we value many things very

highly here below, which are of no value and estimation at all in His eyes, who trieth the hearts and the reins of the children of men. Many things which we consider as SOMETHING, are with Him as NOTHING.

Among men, it is considered a great and glorious thing to lay up riches, and to increase in treasures abundantly; but the word of God says, "Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven," Prov. xxiii. 4, 5. "What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Matt. xvi. 26. It appears, then, that though riches are SOMETHING among men, they are NOTHING before God.

Among men, it is considered especially desirable to get the friendship of the world; but the word of God says, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," 1 John ii. 15. "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God," Jas. iv. 4. The friendships of the world, then, valuable as they may appear, though they are SOMETHING among men, are NOTHING with God.

Among men, it is considered commendable to be thoughtful for the future, and to manifest anxiety to provide for themselves and those who shall come

after them; but the word of God forbids all undue desire and anxiety about these things: "Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?—for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you," Matt. vi. 31—33. Among men, these things are SOMETHING, but they are NOTHING with God.

It is thought to be an excellent thing among men, to sit in the first places of the synagogue, to make long prayers, and to give money to feed the poor; but the word of God points to the heart, to the motive of the mind, and considers these things of no avail, unless accompanied with sincere charity. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.—Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing," 1 Cor. xiii. 1. These things, then, though SOMETHING among men, are NOTHING before God.

Living, as we do, in a world of sin and sorrow, with temptations without, and a heart of unbelief within us, we are continually underrating what is of great value, and attaching an importance to what is worthless; and it would be almost impossible to

point out in how many instances we consider things SOMETHING, which, alas! are NOTHING.

But if riches, and the friendship of the world, and worldly wisdom, and formal prayers, and ostentatious almsgiving, are as NOTHING with God; it becomes us to consider what are those things that will be considered SOMETHING in his sight.

An humble heart, fervent charity, submission to the will of God, reverence for his holy word, dependence on his precious promises, and an unreserved confidence in our Lord and Saviour for life and salvation; these things let us seek, in His name that is above every name; for though they may be accounted as NOTHING before men, they are SOMETHING before God, and will be proved to be so when every thing worldly shall become "less than NOTHING, and vanity."

HALLELUIAH!

I LOVE to pluck a daisy or a buttercup in my path, and to stick it in my bosom. Now there are daisies and buttercups to be found in the every-day occurrences of life, as fair to look upon as the flowers of the field.

There is a text of holy Scripture which says, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God," 1 Cor. x. 31. And a letter that I have but just received from a Christian correspondent in the country supplies me with an excellent practical illustration. The whole epistle has in it but four short lines: the last two of these are as follow. "I am going out to dinner. Country delightful. Crops abundant. Halleluiah!"

Now this is just what I like. Most people know that Halleluiah means, "Praise ye the Lord;" and we can all of us thank God for great favors, but how few of us put a Halleluiah to the record of our common mercies! It strikes me that it would be no bad method to find out the lawfulness of our pleasures, and the spiritual state of our affections, if we were each to ask this question in the midst of every enjoyment—"Can I put up a hearty Halleluiah at the end of it?"

THE BOOK OF TIME.

In a melancholy mood I turned over, in my fancy, some of the dark pages of the book of time.

The volume readily opened where the page was inscribed, "CRIME."

It was the record of human deeds, but demons alone could have prompted them. All that is selfish, designing, dark and deadly; all that envy, hatred, malice, and uncharitableness could suggest and execute, was registered there. I read, and as I read I trembled; for earth seemed crying aloud to Heaven to avenge the countless iniquities of mortal men. Hot-headed rage, red-handed murder, and cold-hearted villany, unsparingly pursued their wild career. Truly "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies," Matt. xv. 19. I hurried through the shadowy paragraphs before me, and turned over the page.

"WAR" was the heading that I lighted on, and I sickened at the sight. War, relentless, bitter, accursed, and cruel, has flung its plagues upon all nations. Fear goes before it, and famine and death tread upon its heels. I read with horror of seiges where fire and sword wasted the city; of battle plains where the war-horse trod fetlock deep in gore; of bayonets sheathed in human bosoms, and of murderous cannon sweeping down the multitude, as the mower cuts down grass with his scythe.

I pressed the leaves together in haste, and opened them at another part; my eye fell on the word "OPPRESSION." Could it be that man, to whom

forbearance and loving-kindness is continually extended by the Father of mercies, could practise such remorseless cruelties! I pondered on the darkened page; the strong had oppressed the weak, the rich had ground the faces of the poor; miserable multitudes, unjustly accused, had stretched their fettered limbs in gloomy dungeons; and countless throngs of oppressed fellow-men, with agonizing groans, had perished in slavery.

I read no more: I closed the hateful volume, and could almost have howled out an anathema against human depravity. But in opening the book of life, the gospel of peace, I met with the words, "Thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things," Rom. ii. 1.

And had my heart within it the germs of these enormities? Yes, in its very core the seeds of sin were thickly set, and matchless grace and immeasurable mercy alone had prevented the acorn from becoming an oak, and the mustard-seed from springing up as the largest of all trees. My mouth was stopped, my heart was humbled. "Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me; then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my

mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer!" Psa. xix. 12—14.

THE PLEASANT FIELD.

Old Humphrey loves a ramble, and he has been taking one. It was a pleasant knolly field, one part of which was so covered with cowslips, that had a myriad of them been taken away, the very bees that were buzzing from flower to flower, would scarcely have missed them.

Into that field came suddenly a party of young people; children from three years old to seven, boys and girls, with ruddy cheeks, sparkling eyes, and hearts running over with happiness. Their attendant could scarcely control them: indeed she hardly appeared to wish so to do, but rather to leave them to their own wild delight.

Like lambs suddenly let loose from the fold, they burst into the field, wonder and joy beaming in every face. What running, racing, and romping! What laughing, hallooing, and gambolling! It was long before they were sober enough to gather the flowerets quietly. Heartily did I give them my

blessing, for my heart yearned towards them, that they might not be happy that hour only, but that God would satisfy them early with his mercy, that they might rejoice and be glad all their days.

"I love to look on a scene like this,
Of wild and careless play,
And persuade myself that I am not old,
And my locks are not yet grey;

For it stirs the blood in an old man's heart,
And it makes his pulses fly,
To catch the thrill of a happy voice,
And the light of a pleasant eye."

THE BALD-HEADED SEXTON.

LISTEN, ye thoughtless young topers! Listen, ye hoary-headed swill-pots, to Old Humphrey's tale of the Bald-headed Sexton.

"See yonder maker of the dead man's bed,
The sexton, hoary-headed chronicle!
Of hard unmeaning face, down which ne'er stole
A gentle tear, with mattock in his hand,
Digs through whole rows of kindred and acquaintance,
By far his juniors! scarce a skull's cast up
But well he knew its owner, and can tell

Some passage of his life. Thus hand in hand
The sot has walked with death twice twenty years,
And yet ne'er yonker on the green laughs louder,
Or clubs a smuttier tale: when drunkards meet
None sings a merrier catch, or lends a hand
More ready to his cup. Poor wretch! he minds not
That soon some trusty brother of the trade
Shall do for him, what he has done for thousands."

BLAIR.

Abel Austin was about twelve years old, when, in the season of autumn, he went on a visit to a little village in the west. Not being accustomed to the country, every object was interesting to him. He walked across the green and sat on the bench under the trees, where the aged people of the village, at the going down of the sun, often got together, and talked of days gone by.

He stood at the door of the blacksmith's shop, while the bellows blew up the roaring fire, and hundreds of sparkles fled in all directions from the red hot iron as it was hammered on the anvil. He called at the cottages, talked with the labouring men, as he met them going to or returning from their work, rambled about the green fields, and lingered in the churchyard among the old tombstones.

One afternoon, he was walking from one green hillock to another in the churchyard, when he came to an old tombstone, almost covered over with moss, so much so that it cost him no little trouble to read what was written on it. A loud and mournful

toll sounded from the belfry just as he had scraped away enough of the moss to be enabled to read the verse. The words were as follow:

Didst hear the toll
Of that sad solemn bell?
It said, "A soul
Is gone to heaven or hell."

The solemn words would hardly have been passed by at any time by Abel Austin without a pause; but the tolling of the bell made them appear more striking than they otherwise would have been. Abel stood looking at the old stone, and once more he read the inscription.

All this while the old bald-headed sexton was throwing out the earth from a grave he was digging. For a time, Abel saw his hands, when he lifted them up above his head to throw out the dirt, but presently he got so low, that the spade only could be seen, and at last, the earth was thrown out without even the spade being visible. When the sexton got out of the grave, Abel went up to talk with him.

"Who is going to be buried here?" said he.

"A man that was old enough to be my father," replied the sexton, as he threw a spadefull of earth over a leg bone, which had been thrown out of the grave, and then patted it down. "Pity but what he had died long ago," continued he, "then there would have been more room for the rest of us."

Here again the sexton struck the edge of his spade on something embedded in the mould; it was a skull, and the unfeeling manner in which he struck it, and covered it over, showed that his employment as a gravedigger had somewhat hardened his heart.

"I knows whose skull that is," said he. "Many a pot o'beer has Joe Larkin and me had together; but he must have been dead this five-and-twenty years ago. He was a rare'un at the tankard, and kept it up as well as here and there one; but, in a drunken fit, he, some how, got down to the milldam, and there he was drowned."

Here the bell, which had stopped for some time, most likely through the inattention of the lad in the belfry, again sounded in a solemn manner. It went to the heart of Abel Austin; but the bald-headed gravedigger thought nothing about the matter.

"When Joe was alive," continued the sexton, as he put his hands into the armholes of his red waistcoat to throw it over his head, for he had been working without his waistcoat and his jacket—"When Joe was alive, there was jolly work with us at the Malt Shovel. Him and I and the blacksmith were cronies, and we had been drinking together the night that Joe got drowned. When he was almost done up, I challenged him to another mug, and that settled him. He got out of his way in going home, and then fell, as I said, into the mill-

pool. He might have had better luck, but we can't live for ever."

The lines on the tombstone, the tolling of the bell, and the opened grave, had disposed Abel to serious thought, and the profane, unfeeling conversation of the bald-headed sexton made him shudder. The careless way in which he had struck the skull of his old companion seemed to amount to cruelty, and especially when it was considered that he was, in some measure, the cause of his untimely end.

Abel Austin was so struck with the hardheartedness of the sexton, that he could not speak to him another word. He did, it is true, intend to say something, and the verse on the old tomb-stone was on the tip of his tongue; but the sexton, with his shining bald head, having stuck on his hat all on one side, and thrown his blue jacket over his shoulder, walked whistling towards the belfry door with his spade in his hand.

When Abel returned home, he had much to say about his country visit. He talked of the great house, the neat cottages, the blacksmith's shop, the village green, the pleasant fields, and the churchyard, nor did he forget to speak of the bald-headed sexton. But it is wonderful how soon impressions wear away from the minds of young people. They are like words written on the snow, or on the sand of the sea-shore, which the heat of the sun, or the returning tide, altogether destroys. What with his books and his playmates, and one thing or other,

Abel, in a little time, had forgotten the solemn lines on the stone, and even the bald-headed sexton was no more remembered.

Winter came with its frosts and snows, spring arrived with its flowers and singing birds, summer spread its grateful influence around, and autumn, abundant autumn, again visited the land, adorning it with loaded fruit trees and crops of golden grain: once more Abel Austin went to spend a little time at the village.

Old scenes bring back to our remembrance many things which we had forgotten; and this was the case with Abel: the sight of the village church directly brought with it the figure of the bald-headed sexton.

The very first walk that Abel took, after his arrival at the village, was to the churchyard, where, as he entered the little gate at the corner, he again heard the bell toll. He walked up to the old gravestone, and found the inscription in much the same state as he had left it, save that the moss was gradually filling up the letters. Though he had not thought about the verse, it again came into his memory even before he read it on the stone.

He had not mused long at the spot, when he saw at a distance a man coming across the green hillocks with a spade and a long iron borer on his shoulder. He came up within a few yards of the old tombstone; and then, putting down his spade, he began to bore into the ground with the long iron

rod, that he might know whether there was a coffin or not where he was about to dig a grave. In a short time, he set to work in earnest to dig a full-sized grave.

Abel Austin drew near to ask after the bald-headed sexton, for his mind misgave him; very likely he might have died since his last visit. "You are not the gravedigger that was here last year," said he, addressing the man. "No," was the reply, "and you'll not see him again neither. Old bald-headed Nokes has done his day's work at last, and I am now digging his grave. He took a mug too many at the Malt Shovel on Saturday night, and broke his neck in tumbling from the bank side into the hollow way. He has covered up many a one in his time, and I'll cover him up now."

The bell tolled again, while the gravedigger made this careless, profane remark; and Abel Austin, with a shudder, turned his eyes to the old gravestone, and walked thoughtfully away, repeating the lines,

> Didst hear the toll
> Of that sad solemn bell?
> It said, "A soul
> Is gone to heaven or hell."

TURN YOUR TELESCOPE.

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help."—Psa. cxxi. 1.

When a child, I caught up a telescope to view more distinctly a distant object, but soon found myself worse off than ever; for the object in question appeared smaller and farther off than before. "Turn your telescope!" said a friend who was standing at my elbow: "turn your telescope; for you are looking through the wrong end of it: when the telescope is turned, matters will be mended."

Christian, art thou dismayed in thinking how little and how changeable thy love is to God? Turn the telescope; for things will only get worse while thine eye is fixed where it now is: look through the other end, and thou wilt behold the vastness and the unchangeableness of God's love to thee. Again, I say, turn the telescope; for a steady gaze at God's love to us, and his promises in the gospel, is the best means to excite our love to God.

THIS WORLD, OR THE NEXT?

THERE are many people in the world who like religion, and who love religion; but then, much as they like and love it, they like and love the world a great deal more. So long as we like and love religion less than the world, we cannot fully enjoy its comforts and consolations.

There are thousands who would be seekers after the happiness of heaven, if they could do so without foregoing the pleasures of earth. This world first, and heaven after, would do very well; but "Seek ye first the kingdom of God" is too hard a command for them. For them!—Ay! it is too hard for any of us, unless God's grace has made it easy.

Now, how does this matter affect you and me? Are we choosing our own plan, or God's plan? Are we obeying our own will, or God's will? Have we made up our minds, come what will, to run after the pleasures of a world which passeth away? or are we resolved, at all hazards, to seek after the joys of a world that endureth for ever?

THE TONGUE.

Let an old man speak, for he may not long have the opportunity; and let him be heard, and heeded too, for his words are worth a moment's consideration.

The tongue has set more people by the ears, ruined the peace of more families, and done more mischief in the world, than all the highwaymen that were ever hung. He that sets his neighbour's premises on fire with a torch is taken up and tried for his life; but he that inflames the hearts of his neighbours with his tongue is allowed to go free. Sometimes he propagates the lie of his own making, and sometimes the unfounded report of another, going forth with the poison of asps under his lips; and covers over the sin of his evil speaking, lying, and slandering, with the poor, pitiful excuse, that he has "heard it said so."

When a house is on fire, though the flame bursts through the floors, wraps round the walls, and rages among the rafters, you may arrest its progress with a water-engine; or you may restrain it from setting other houses on fire; or, even if it should burn down a whole street, a village, or a town, there is an end to it: but where is the end to the raging of the tongue? "The tongue is a fire, a world of

iniquity," James iii. 6. It spreads far and wide, it compasses sea and land, and no engine can repress its power: of all conflagrations, there is none so rapid, wide-spreading, and destructive, as the conflagration of the tongue.

The sword is a deadly instrument, and many are the mighty that it has laid low; yet it is not half so deadly as the tongue. The teeth of the sons of men "are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword," Psa. lvii. 4. Where one has been injured by the sword, a hundred have been wounded by the tongue: the sword provoketh to momentary contention; but the tongue, by its grevious words, stirs up lasting anger, envy, hatred, malice, and uncharitableness.

Fierce are the wild beasts of the forest, when pressed by hunger; for they spare not, neither show pity to the traveller that falls in their way. Savage are the wolf, the hyena, and the tiger; mighty is the elephant, and terrible the lion, the monarch of the woods; but these are not so fierce as the tongue, nor so untamable, for they may be subdued and made gentle as the lamb. "Every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: but the tongue can no man tame," James iii. 7, 8.

Dreadful is the plague when the leprous spot spreads in the flesh. When the infectious breath and contaminating touch conspire to carry on the pestilence through the crowded city, mourning and

lamentations increase, desolation and death abound; but the tongue destroys health, peace, and reputation. "Death and life are in the power of the tongue;" it wounds not only the body, but the spirit. It not only injures the living, but blasts with its pestilential poison the character of the dead. "What shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue?" The flame, the sword, the wild beast and the pestilence, all together, do not half so much injury to mankind as the tongue. Our prayer should go forth in the morning, and be again repeated at eventide, "Lord, cleanse thou my heart, and keep thou my tongue from evil." God hateth "a proud look" and "a lying tongue;" but "the tongue of the wise is health."

"Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour," Psa. xv. 1—3.

O God, thy goodness and thy love
Preserve the old and young:
Lead thou my wandering heart above
And guard and guide my tongue.

THE CORNCRAKE.

When walking abroad in the country, it is not one thing, but every thing, that seems to set forth a lesson of instruction. Every tree of the field, every branch of the tree, every spray of the branch, and every leaf of the spray, appears to address Old Humphrey.

One evening, on returning home through some fields of mowing grass, I stopped short on hearing the noise of the landrail, or corncrake, so called from the well known sound it so constantly utters. Many a time had I listened to the corncrake, and compared its noise to the creaking of a thick branch in the winds; and many a time had I hunted in vain to find it. But this time it seemed close at hand.

"Just by that sprig of green sorrel," said I to myself, as I tripped over the grass, "I shall find it;" but no such thing! When I got there, the sound was in a quite different direction. Still I followed the sound, and still was I deceived. Now it was behind, and then before me; now to the right hand, and then to the left; but all of no use: the moment I reached one place, the sound was in another. Repeated disappointments brought me back to the beaten path. I did not discover that evening where

the corncrake was; but I found out, to a certainty, many places where it was not.

Perhaps, reader, you may have been as much disappointed in your search after happiness, as I was in my search after the corncrake; and perhaps, too, like me, you have been glad to get back again to the spot whence you first set out. I was led by the corncrake a long dance through the mowing grass; and, if you are pursuing earthly happiness, you will be led a long dance too. Hundreds of us have made up our minds to be happy: we have felt sure that if we could do this, or get that, or obtain the other, we should have little else to wish for; but we may as well join in a chase after the corncrake, as after happiness in worldly things; for we are just as likely to catch the one as to get possession of the other.

We have countless blessings to be grateful for; but the words spoken by the Redeemer to his disciples were not, "In the world ye shall be happy," but, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." It will be wise, then, to let the corncrake-happiness of the world deceive us no longer, whether we hear it afar off, or whether it appears within our reach. Let us give up the fruitless chase, and seek peace only in Christ, confidently looking forward to enjoy final and complete happiness in His presence, where there is "fulness of joy" and "pleasures for evermore."

SING FOR JOY.

As the trumpeter does more on the field of battle with his trumpet, by animating his comrades, than he could do with his sword; so I, being a poor singer, may do more by exhorting others to sing, than by singing myself. "O sing unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the Lord all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day," Psa. xcvi. 1, 2.

Sing, pardoned sinner! for thy Saviour is called to his heavenly throne. He who died for thee is to be thy Judge. What, then, hast thou to fear? Thou once wast at enmity with God; but now thou art reconciled by thine adorable Redeemer. Thou once wast in bondage; but now thou art at liberty, and canst exult in the hope of everlasting life. Sing, sinner! for thy mourning is turned into joy, and thy fear of hell exchanged for the hope of heaven.

Sing, soldier of the cross! for the Captain of thy salvation has obtained the victory. The enemies were proud and high; but they are humbled and brought low. Thou wast a prisoner; but thy ransom is paid. Sing, soldier! for, though thou wast a rebel fighting under the standard of sin, now thou

art a true and faithful soldier of Jesus Christ, conquering under the banner of the cross.

Sing, sojourner of the desert! for the heat and burden of the day are well nigh past. Thirsty thou hast been; but now thou hast rivers of water in a dry place. The sun has sorely smitten thee; but now thou hast the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. Sing, sojourner of the desert! for the promised land is in view, and thou shalt enter with joy into thy everlasting inheritance.

Sing, weary pilgrim! for thy crooked paths are made straight, and thy rough places plain. The burden of sin that oppressed thee is taken from thy back, and laid upon another who alone has power to bear it. A staff is given to thee to support thy steps; a cordial, to revive thy heart. The fire shall no more kindle upon thee, nor the waters overflow thee. Sing, pilgrim! for the golden gates of the heavenly city are open, and thy Saviour waits to receive thee.

Sing, Christian! for thou hast cause. Thy Leader and thy Lord is near to heal thy wounds, to dry thy sorrows, and to supply all thy wants out of the riches of his grace. Art thou weak? he will strengthen thee; ignorant? he will instruct thee; cast down? he will raise thee up and support thee. A crown and a royal robe are prepared for thee. Sing, then, in time; for thou wilt soon sing a new song in eternity.

Sing, pardoned sinner! Sing, soldier of the cross!

Sing, sojourner of the desert! Sing, weary pilgrim! and sing, Christian! for you have cause for singing. "O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods," Psa. xcv. 1—3.

THE HOLLY BUSH.

It signifies but little whether we take for our subject the cedar of Lebanon, or the hyssop on the house wall, so that we turn the matter to a good account. Listen, then, to Old Humphrey on the holly bush.

The morning was frosty, and the leafless trees hung with icicles, when the red berries of a holly bush attracted the attention of an idiot boy. He scrambled through the prickly barrier, and seized on the tempting fruit; but found it bitter to his taste, and surrounded with thorns. His hat fell from his head, his hands tingled with pain, his clothes were torn, and his face was covered with scratches.

And how many a misguided wretch, in the pur-

suit of pleasure, has been robbed of his patrimony, stung by his conscience, torn by his false friends, and lacerated by the unkindness of the world! The man of the world is an idiot boy, and worldly pleasure at best but a holly bush.

The idiot boy had forgotten his disappointment, when the sky was suddenly obscured, and a momentary storm descended on his head. Instead of enduring the temporary inconvenience, he thoughtlessly increased his misfortunes by taking shelter in the holly bush.

How parallel with the rashness of thoughtless humanity! When visited with the sudden blast of calamity or misfortune, hasty and petulant under our afflictions, though wounded by the world a thousand and a thousand times, we yet run to that world for comfort and security! Why, we might as well take shelter in a holly bush.

Mark how quarrelsome this bush appears: ever alive to the slightest insult, it pardons no fault, it forgives no injury, but immediately punishes the wilful or inadvertent offender. Ah, my friends! in this sharpness of disposition, this quickness to revenge our supposed grievances, we all too much resemble the holly bush.

But let us take a nearer view of the holly bush. What a rattling it makes when disturbed by the winds! How rudely the boughs rustle against their brother branches, and how sharply are the leaves of the same spray pointed against each other!

I could think of the opposing interests of the world—its wars, its rumours, its commotions; nation set against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; the party spirit of towns, the scandal of villages, and the feuds of private life; frequently branches of the same family at variance with each other. I could think of these things, I say, until I regarded the whole world as a holly bush.

And what are its inhabitants? Evergreens in appearance, glossy in their expression, soft and silky in their professions; but, desire their golden fruit, stand in need of their assistance, run to them for protection, lean on them for support, and you will confess with bitterness, that man, when trusted in, is no better than a holly bush.

But let us consider: the bitterest herb may be grateful to the smell, the most brackish water prove medicinal; and something surely may be said in favour of the holly bush.

It is tenacious of its rights, and jealous of its liberties; but it never attacks the liberties of others. It is ever ready to defend itself, but is never known to be the aggressor. Nations may here learn wisdom from the holly bush.

It is grateful in the darkest seasons; it repines not at the wintry winds.

> Though cold its place, though lone its lot
> It buds, it bears, it murmurs not,

but in the bleakest storms and rudest blasts looks

cheerfully towards the skies, and the fruit of gratitude at the darkest season is abundant on its branches. And can we learn nothing from the holly bush?

Perhaps the little spray that I now hold in my hand was among the topmost branches of its parent tree, and bore its blushing honours thick upon its aspiring head, defying the wintry blast, and exulting in security; but it was untimely severed from the place where it grew, it was cut down in the glory of its youth.

And we may endure the rude ravage of time,
And exult, though the loud howling tempest may roar;
And we, too, may fall in the midst of our prime,
And the place that now knows us, may know us no more.

THE CHRISTIAN'S LEVER.

"If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you," Matt. xvii. 20.

A CHRISTIAN will willingly get good from every thing, and a lever may help him to a profitable reflection.

The lever may be regarded as a simple instru-

ment; but the right knowledge of its power, and its proper mode of application, was a mighty discovery. A child, by means of the lever, will do the work of a man. Christian! say not thou art come to a stand, though the mountains of the earth tower up to the skies in thy way. Lay hold of the lever that God has prepared for the use of his people, THE PRAYER OF FAITH: this is the Christian's mighty lever. The right use of this, I would speak with humility as well as boldness, will both bring Christ down to thee, and raise thee up to Christ.

THE DIVER.

IT is a pleasant thing, when pilgrims are travelling the same road together, to beguile the time by the relation of their past adventures. A Zion-bound pilgrim lately gave me an interesting history, in nearly the following words:

"Often, in the days of my youth, have I gazed on fragments of ruddy coral, goodly shells and pearls, costly stones and curious sea-weed, and thought of those wrestlers of the ocean, who dive down to the caverns of the deep in search of pearls.

"The wild wonders of the ocean, explored by the

pearl-diver, in his painful struggles to win the treasures of the raging ocean, have been at such seasons present with me. The broken ship and half buried anchor, the monsters of the world of waters, the sharp, craggy rock, the deep, dark cavern, the glittering spar, the sparkling gem, and light-reflecting pearl. 'They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep;' and he who pursues the wild and life-wasting calling of a diver, has scenes of terror and beauty presented to his eyes, that others never saw. I speak of these things feelingly, for I myself have been a diver; but do not mistake me. Pearls though I have, costly beyond all price, yet they were not brought up from the mighty deep: listen, and you shall hear my relation.

"For twenty years of my life, I was a diver in books, and brought up stores of knowledge that to me were prizable, gems of thought and costly pearls of reflection: but all this time I was as much a stranger to myself as I was to the bottom of the sea. I sought my own pleasure, I delighted to hear some new thing, and to see some new sight; but there was one sight I could never see, and that was, the sinfulness of my own heart.

"One Sabbath day, as I sat in the house of God, it pleased the Holy Spirit to take of the things spoken by a zealous and faithful minister of the gospel, and apply them with power to my soul. The word of

the Lord was 'quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow,' and was 'a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.' The man of God seemed to smite me 'with the rod of his mouth,' and to dash me in pieces 'like a potter's vessel.' That sermon, for the first time in my life, set me diving into my own bosom. I descended, not altogether unattended by the light of His Spirit, who will 'search Jerusalem with candles,' into the deep caverns of my own evil heart. What I found there, I will not make known, nor attempt to describe the terrors that filled my soul at the discovery. Blessed be the God of mercy! in my distress I became a diver in the Scriptures of eternal truth; and, though for a long time I was unsuccessful, through his goodness who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, I became possessed of the pearl of repentance, and cried out, 'God be merciful to me a sinner!' Luke xviii. 13.

"Though I then possessed a gem more precious than the gold of Ophir, in the pearl of repentance, yet for a long time I knew not the value of it, nor felt any comfort in its possession, until one day a kind friend, by his encouraging and Christian counsel, set me diving again, no longer into the troubled sea of my own guiltiness, nor the dark, frowning waves of God's holy law, but into the boundless ocean of the everlasting promises of the gospel.

Another pearl was then added to my treasure, and that was the pearl of hope; so that I was enabled to rejoice in the blessed assurance of Him who spake as never man spake: 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out,' John vi. 37.

"The time came, however, when I left off to 'do business in great waters;' for things went very smoothly and well with me. I began to think, with David, that the Lord had made my mountain to stand so fast, that I should 'never be moved.' I began to be less careful, and then was less prayerful, in my heavenly walk. This carelessness and self-confidence by degrees brought in great backsliding of heart, and barrenness of soul; and where it would have ended, I cannot tell: but it pleased a faithful God, who had set his love upon me, to visit me with the rod. The dark clouds of his providence gathered above me, and a heavy storm broke over my head. One dearer far to me than my own life was suddenly snatched away, and I was left a lonely pilgrim on the earth. Then, indeed, was my soul overwhelmed within me; and, being exceedingly tossed in the tempest of affliction, my cry was, 'All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me!' Again I became a diver; and, in the deep waters of adversity, by the mercy of a covenant God, who made all these bitter things to work together for my eternal good, the pearl of submission was added to my treasures. 'The Lord gave,' said I, 'and the

Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.'

"In this 'great deep,' I saw more of the works of the Lord and his wonders than I had ever known before. He made all his goodness to pass before me, and showed me wherefore he contended with me. I had departed from him. I had left my 'first love.' I had joined myself unto idols, and mine eyes were turned earthward; but in these deep waters the Lord lifted them up, and then I saw 'no man, save Jesus only.' Two other pearls were obtained through mercy—the pearls of love, and of Christian assurance. Yes! when the winds and waves were stilled, there was 'a great calm;' and in that calm my soul could say unto the Lord, not only, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee?' but also, 'There is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.' These, then, are some of the pearls which, through mercy, I possess.

"I must now say a few words about one pearl which I have kept back till the last, because, in comparison thereof, all the pearls I have spoken of are worthless as the small dust of the earth; and, as my Lord knows how apt I am by my waywardness to lose or injure the pearls and ornaments in my possession, he has placed this one Pearl of pearls, which is the sum and substance of all my wealth, in so secure and exalted a place, that it is utterly impossible for the bitterest of my enemies, either on earth or in hell, to touch it. God has

placed this inestimable treasure 'far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion,' even in heaven itself, at the right hand of his eternal throne. Yes, this precious 'Pearl of great price' is the Lord Jesus Christ, my sacrifice and my Saviour, the eternal and everlasting God, who, by the offering up of himself, has purchased for me an inheritance in the kingdom of his Father, where I shall be with him for ever and ever."

THE SAVINGS' BANK.

It may seem hard to a servant when she gets her wages paid her, to go directly and put it into the savings' bank. It may seem hard to her at the time; and, if she be of an impatient disposition, she may think to herself, "Is it not foolish in me to go and pay away my money as fast as I can earn it? While other people are sporting their new ribands and laces, here I go and put my money out of sight, in this great house, and for a long time hear no more of it." But by and by when a time of need comes, a time of sickness or misfortune, she goes again to the savings' bank, and finds it a very great

comfort to be able to draw out the means of helping her through her necessity.

The impatient Christian, or even the patient but faint-hearted Christian, is often inclined to cry out that he hears nothing of his prayers. "While the worldly-minded around me are at ease," says he, "my prayers are mingled with my tears day and night at the footstool of my God; but I hear no more of them." Alas! he is for a moment tempted to say, "I have cleansed my heart in vain;" but, by and by, comes a time of great trial, a heavy affliction, a sore bereavement, a painful sickness, or he is brought down to the gates of death; and then the Lord is a wall of fire round about him, fills his heart with heavenly peace and resignation, and gives him "a happy issue" out of all his afflictions. Then he finds that his heavenly Treasurer has not overlooked the faintest sigh that escaped his breast, but was only reserving the profits of it until the most suitable time of need.

THE BLACKSMITH.

"Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work," Isa. liv. 16.

I was once overtaken by a wintry storm, and was fain to take refuge in the shop of a blacksmith. Fancy to yourself Old Humphrey standing upon the high hearth, with his head part of the way up the broad chimney, the bright flame shining full on his face!

What an animating scene is a blacksmith's shop! all noise, blaze, and bustle! The blacksmith takes a piece of iron, burns it in the fire until it is sufficiently malleable; then puts it upon the anvil, and beats it about, until it is formed into the shape for which it is intended: perhaps a horse-shoe, a hoe, or a pick-axe, which is brought forth from the blacksmith's shop ready for service.

The people of God are sometimes sorely tried by their worldly-minded neighbours, who are set against them. It is natural to feel angry with those who thus afflict and oppose them; but Christians should check these feelings, with such a thought as the following: "How do I know what service my heavenly Father has designed me to do for him? These very people, though I count them such

troubles to my soul, may be smiths blowing the coals in the fire. They may be modelling me under his superintendence, and bringing me forth an instrument prepared for his use."

THE BOG ON THE SCOTTISH BORDER.

If you have never suffered from high-mindedness, your experience has been very different from that of Old Humphrey. It is but a comical figure that a man cuts in crossing a moor on horseback, on the Scottish border, if he happens to be confident in his own judgment and unaccustomed to moorland travel. Too proud to drag along at the heels of his mounted guide, he bravely leaps on to a patch of dark brown heather, which he takes to be hard and dry, when his horse sinks into the treacherous bog up to the girths, and he himself is liberally bespattered with mud. Well! there is no help for it; and, if he has obtained nothing else that is likely to be of service to him, he has, at least, gained the benefit of experience.

Again proceeding onwards, carefully avoiding every dark brown patch within his view, he makes for

a strip of bright green herbage, near the bottom of the hill, nothing doubting that there he shall find firm footing. Alas! he is now worse off than before. His steed is knee deep in a plashy moss occasioned by a spring from the mountain side, and he himself is thrown over his head into the wet grass and yielding mire. Crawling through the mud and water, and thoroughly cured of his self-confidence, he submits his own judgment to that of another. Once more mounting his affrighted steed, he follows his guide with all the humility of a beaten spaniel, and arrives at his journey's end without any additional calamity.

Is there not much in this description akin to the boggling and floundering of a backsliding Christian, when forsaking the guidance of God, and following for a season the devices and desires of his own heart? Oh! what muddy bogs, what miry sloughs, does he get into, and what a spectacle to men and angels does he present! But no sooner is his heart humbled, no sooner does he patiently submit humbly to the guidance of his heavenly Father, then he gets again into the right road. "I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord," Psa. xl. 1—3. He no longer

wishes to take the lead, but humbly and gratefully cries out to his Leader and Lord, "Thou shalt be my rock and my refuge;" "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory," Psa. lxxiii. 24.

TREES AND PLANTS.

WHAT an interesting page in the volume of creation is that of plants, and shrubs, and trees! I loved to look on it in my childhood, and I delight to linger on it in my age.

Of all plants that flourish in the wild garden of the woods and commons, you will surely not find one more curious and beautiful than the fern. But it is not its curiosity nor its beauty of which I am now going to speak, but a characteristic it possesses in common with many, indeed with most other plants and trees, and one that possibly you may not have observed. When you next meet with a fine fern plant in your country rambles, take out your pencil and make a rough sketch of the shape and character of the plant as it grows.

Break then one branch from off the stem, and observe how precisely it will bear the leading features

of the whole plant: you hold in your hand a complete fern, but of smaller dimensions. Strip off then one feathery spray from the branch, and there is still a complete bush, bearing all the marks of the parent tree. Pull off the spray one little sprout of green, and still you have a fern bush in miniature.

The peculiarity I have mentioned may be traced, though not marked quite so strongly, in the holly tree, the fir tree, the sycamore, and also in large trees; the branch, the spray, and the leaf of the oak, the elm, the poplar, and the willow, all bear the image and character of the whole tree.

Christian, canst thou not apply this in some way or other to thy own advantage? Is it not written, that He whom thou servest is the Head, and his people are the members? That he is the true Vine, and his followers are the branches? Pursue for a moment this thought.

Perhaps it may be found that the church of Christ, the whole family of God, bears Christ's image, not as a body only, but as individuals; and that, as a single leaf bears the likeness of the branch, and the branch the likeness of the tree, so a single member of the church bears the image of the whole church, and the whole church the image of Christ. Thus, then, Christ is the Tree, the church is a branch; a Christian congregation or family is a spray, and a disciple of Jesus is a leaf.

WHY IS IT?

"WHY is it?" said a friend of mine; "How comes it to pass that the people who love *this* world leave the people who love *God* so much to themselves? God's children are lovely in their conduct, and full of kindness even to their enemies. Why, then, does the world look shy at them?"

"There are many reasons," replied I; "for 'the friendship of the world is enmity with God;' James iv. 4; but I will give you one: listen to me, and I will tell you a story. Some time ago, I spent a few days with a young friend, a relation of mine, who was about to put on her bridal robe. Now, I loved her; for she was a timid, gentle, and amiable maiden: but, for the first time in my life, I was tired of her company. She told me all about her intended marriage, and there was no end to the subject. There was one thought in her head, one name on her lip, and one love in her heart. How they met, when they parted, and where they met again, with the ups and the downs, the doubts and the fears, the sunshine and the shade, which they had passed through—all was told me. I can bear much; but this I could not bear, for there was no end to it!

"To change the subject, I spoke of God's glorious creation, of gay flowers and of green leaves,

of sun, moon, and stars; but it was useless: there was not a flower that looked to the fair face of heaven, not a leaf that fluttered in the wind, but it reminded her of something of that one never-ending subject. The sun, moon, and stars seemed only remembered by her as having lighted up the skies under which she had walked with her lover. There was, as I said before, one thought in her head, one name on her lip, and one love in her heart. I grew weary of my amiable relative, and I left her to herself.

"Now, lovely as God's children are, kind, good, and gentle as they are, it is not much to be wondered at that they should be deserted; for they are almost always dwelling on one subject. The love of God is their continual theme; when once it is begun, there is no end to it: they have one thought in their heads, one name on their lips, and one love in their hearts.

> The rolling orbs proclaim in heaven
> His goodness every hour,
> And glowing proofs of love are given
> In every leaf and flower.

Worldly people have so many subjects to occupy their attention, that they cannot be confined so much to this one, and therefore it is that they leave God's people to themselves."

A PRECIOUS PROMISE.

Though you may not, like me, have grey hairs on your head, yet you may have made the remark, that there are many of the comforts of this life suited only to particular seasons and circumstances; some for summer, and some for winter; some for day, and some for night; some for health, and some for sickness; but the precious portions and promises of the Book of Truth seem calculated for all times, and for all situations in which we can be placed.

Let us take up one of them. "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God," Heb. iv. 9. What a blessed portion is this for the soul that hungers after righteousness! What a blessed expectation for the weary pilgrim who is toil-worn, and faint with his journey! What a blessed haven for the tempest-tost Christian mariner! What a sustaining staff! What a firm rock to tread on! What a blessed encouragement to the discouraged, to be assured, notwithstanding every fear and every disappointment, that "there remaineth a rest to the people of God."

Are you one of these people? Have you the mark in the forehead? the token in the heart? the witness in the spirit? Rejoice, then, with exceeding great joy. You may have been buffeted, and

you may be buffeted again. Weary you may be of worldly toil and trouble, and weary you will be; but what of that? The hand of the Eternal has graven the sentence, "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God;" and that rest shall assuredly be yours.

This is a precious portion and promise for the beginning or the latter end of the year. It will do for the spring, the summer, the autumn, and the winter. It is an elixir of life, that will keep without injury in all climates, and may be taken at night or morning with equal advantage: nay, it may be a comforting cordial to you every hour of the day, and every minute of the hour. Let come what will, riches or poverty, health or sickness, joy or sorrow, life or death, the promise still holds good, "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God."

THE CRAZY MAN AND HIS WATCH.

A poor crazy fellow, one day, on finding his watch half an hour too slow, insisted upon it that the sun had gone down that evening half an hour sooner than it ought to have done; when a sober-minded neighbour of his assured him, that, be that

as it might, he would find it wiser and easier to regulate his watch by the sun, than to attempt to order the sun's revolutions by his watch.

How many conceited Socialists, how many vainglorious Deists, and how many proud Atheists, are acting as this poor crazy man acted! Poor, purblind, mortal creatures would do well to remember, when cavilling at the word and works of Almighty God, that it is much more likely, than the contrary, that Wisdom, Power, and Goodness, should be right, and that ignorance, weakness, infirmity, and folly, should be wrong.

THE BANIAN TREE.

What a mercy it is, when our faith and love towards the Redeemer are strong enough to enable us, like the bee that gathers honey alike from the rose and the thistle, to gather instruction, comfort, and encouragement, from every thing around us! Then it is that we can rejoice "with joy unspeakable," in the midst of manifold blessings; then it is that

> Meekly, humbly, bending low,
> Amid our griefs we kiss the rod;

And find, in every earthly woe,
The mingled mercies of our God.

On reading, the other day, an account of the Banian tree, I was struck with the comparison which might be made between this tree, and the humble and sincere Christian who lives a life of faith in the Son of God, and seeks not only to know, but to do his will.

The Banian tree is found in more beauty and perfection in the scorching clime of India, than in other places. It is sometimes called the Burr tree, or Indian fig, and is different from any tree that grows in England. Each tree is in itself a grove, and sometimes spreads to an amazing extent; hardly ever decaying while the earth affords it sustenance. Every branch from the main body throws out its own roots several yards from the ground: these, at first, are thin, slender fibres; but they grow thicker until they reach the surface, and then, striking into the ground, increase to large trunks, and become parent trees, shooting out new branches, which produce roots, and trees, in the same manner as before: thus the tree grows, every branch producing a succession of stems, until the whole assumes the appearance of a grove.

A Banian tree, with its many trunks, forms the most beautiful bowers and cool recesses that can be imagined; its leaves are large, soft, and of a lively green; its fruit is a small fig, which, when quite

ripe, is of a bright scarlet colour. It affords sustenance or shelter to the monkey, the squirrel, and the peacock; as well as to various kinds of small birds.

We can hardly form a proper notion of the extent of these trees. On the banks of the river Merbudda, a Banian tree grows, which, if measured round its principal stems, is nearly two thousand feet in circumference. It has three hundred and fifty large trunks, and more than three thousand smaller ones; and it is said that seven thousand persons may find ample room to repose under its shade. Green wood-pigeons, doves, peacocks, monkeys, squirrels, and large bats, find a shelter among its branches.

The Banian tree flourishes and throws out its green leaves beneath the radiance of the sun; the Christian throws out his graces beneath the beams of the Sun of Righteousness. The Banian tree spreads wide its branches, which, taking root, produce other trees; the Christian extends his influence, his faith, his love, and his hopes, which, through mercy, taking root in other hearts, influence them to grow in grace, and to become Christians like himself. The Banian tree becomes a grove of goodly trees, pleasant to gaze upon: the Christian, blessed from above, spreads abroad the gospel of the Redeemer, and thus multiplies the followers of Christ, till he forms a band, a goodly company, of faithful worshippers. The Banian tree brings forth fruit, beautiful to the eye: and the

Christian bears fruit also, far more lovely than that of the trees of the field. The Banian tree is a shelter to the creatures that seek its protection: the Christian man, too, by his love unfeigned, his zeal, his fidelity, his prayers, and his praises, is a shelter and protection to all whom he can assist and serve.

But while we thus draw the resemblance between the Christian and the Banian tree, let us bear in mind, in reference to ourselves, that "a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit;" and also, that "every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire," Matt. vii. 18, 19.

ON WHAT ARE YOU DEPENDING?

STRANGE as it may appear, it is a truth, that Christians are often helped by their hinderances, and made rich by their losses; and I may add also, that by their falls they learn to stand on their feet the more steadily.

An hour ago, I walked abroad with a youthful companion; the sun had sometime set, and the landscape, as the poet says, had "faded," and a

"solemn stillness" pervaded the air. Some will have it, that youth and age are not fit associates; but often do I find just the reverse of this to be the truth. Well, we seated ourselves on a rail overhanging a dry ditch of some depth. "Have a care," said I; "for you know age is cautious and oftentimes mistrustful. Have a care," said I; "for the rail on which we are seated is but a crazy one."

"Crazy!" cried out young confidence, "Crazy! why, it is as firm as a rock!" "Ay," thought I, "the rocks on which some people depend are as uncertain as the shifting sand." In five or ten minutes after, (for, notwithstanding my sage reflection, I had kept my seat,) the rail gave way under us with a crash, and we both fell backwards at full length into the ditch. My companion fell lightly, and was not injured; but, as for me, I did not escape without bruises: but nevertheless, after slowly gathering myself up again, I walked away much benefited by my mishap; for it suggested to my mind this very profitable inquiry, "On what are you depending?"

Now, there are many, who, though too worldly-wise to trust the weight of their bodies on a crazy rail, are thoughtless and reckless enough to trust the welfare of their souls on a foundation equally precarious. On what, then, are you depending?

It is quite bad enough when our earthly hopes break down with us; but it is a thousand times worse when the same thing happens to our heavenly

expectations. If you are content with the beggarly elements of time, your foundation does not so much matter; but, if you have set your heart on the glorious things of eternity, bear in mind that "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. iii. 11.

THE BARRACK YARD.

As I passed by the barrack yard the other day, I heard a firing and thundering; so I stepped in to see what it was all about. The horses were drawn up in two files on each side the yard, and the soldiers were firing before their faces. This was to accustom them to the flash and the report of the musketry, that they might be steady in the battle-field. There was a great deal of snorting, and prancing, and trampling among some of them, as they tossed up their noses, and flung about their long manes in the air. But others, who were more experienced, stood it out bravely, only showing their mettle by their glaring eye-balls.

Before God's children are accustomed to trouble, before they are disciplined in the school of trial, they are apt to start aside on trivial occasions.

When a blast of affliction blows up from the north, when dark clouds of adversity gather together in the west, when there is a whirlwind of perplexities in the south, and a sharp storm of tribulation comes down from the east, they are almost driven to their wit's end, little thinking that their heavenly Father is thus fitting them to bear the heat and burden of the day, that they may fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life. Poor Job, when his troubles first came upon him, rent his mantle and shaved his head: he grieved in silence for seven days and seven nights, and then opened his mouth, and cursed his day. But how was it with him at the last? Why, he stood steady in the midst of his afflictions, as brave as a lion, and as meek as a lamb. "Though he slay me," said he, "yet will I trust in him," Job xiii. 15.

THE PORTRAITS.

Did you ever hear the story of the two portraits! Come! I will tell it to you; for it is a striking one.

A painter who wanted a picture of innocence, drew the likeness of a child at prayer. The little

suppliant was kneeling by the side of his mother, who regarded him with tenderness. The palms of his lifted hands were reverently pressed together; his rosy cheek spoke of health, and his mild blue eye was upturned with an expression of devotion and peace. This portrait of young Rupert was highly prized by the painter; for he had bestowed on it great pains: he hung it up in his study, and called it Innocence.

Years rolled along, and the painter became an aged man; but the picture of Innocence still adorned his study walls. Often had he thought of painting a contrast to his favourite portrait; but opportunity had not served. He had sought for a striking model of guilt, but had failed to find one. At last, he effected his purpose by paying a visit to a neighbouring gaol.

On the damp floor of his dungeon, lay a wretched culprit, named Randal, heavily ironed. Wasted was his body, worn was his cheek, and anguish unutterable was seen in his hollow eye; but this was not all: vice was visible in his face, guilt was branded, as with a hot iron, on his brow, and horrid imprecations burst from his blaspheming tongue. The painter executed his task to the life, and bore away the successful effort of his pencil. The portraits of young Rupert and old Randal were hung, side by side, in his study; the one representing Innocence, the other Guilt.

But who was young Rupert who kneeled in

prayer by the side of his mother in meek devotion? And who was old Randal, who lay manacled on the dungeon floor, cursing and blaspheming! Alas! the two were one! Young Rupert and old Randal were the same. Led by bad companions into the paths of sin, no wonder that young Rupert found bitterness and sorrow. That brow which in childhood was bright with peace and joy, in years became darkened by guilt and shame; and that heart which once was the abode of happiness, afterwards became the habitation of anguish. Fathers, tell the tale to your children! Mothers, whisper it in the ears of your lisping little ones, that they may know betimes the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the exceeding deceitfulness of the human heart. Well may youth and age walk humbly before God, putting up the prayer, "Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings," Psa. xvii. 8.

THE GERANIUM TREE.

"For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease."—Job xiv. 7.

Let an old man go back to the days that have long passed by. My grandmother had an old favourite geranium tree, which was cut down nearly to the roots, and had looked very sickly a long time. One Sunday morning, as she sat at her window, her eye fell anxiously upon the geranium tree, which we had not noticed for a day or two. "Ah," exclaimed she, "it is dead!" "Dead!" said I. "Yes," she replied, mournfully: "I thought it would die; to-morrow it must be turned out of the pot."

The next morning, I heard my grandmother calling to me in a sprightly voice: she was bustling about in her little garden; and I judged that something must have pleased her. As soon as I appeared: "Do you see," said she, and she held up the forlorn-looking geranium tree, "do you see? I was just going to throw it away, but look here, and here, and there again!"

I stooped down, and looked very particularly, for I had no spectacles on like my grandmother: at last I discovered, here and there, on either side of

the old withered stump, a little sprout of tender green. A tiny budding forth, hardly bigger, to be sure, than the head of a pin, but quite enough to dispel the fears of my grandmother, and to assure us both, beyond a doubt, that the tree was alive.

Look up, my soul! There is just such hope for thee. How often do I find thee sickly, barren, cold, and lifeless! full of sin and wretchedness! Thou affrightest me, and fillest me with deep distress; yea, I am ready to say unto thee, "Thou art dead; why cumberest thou the ground?" But, blessed be God! another hour dispels these fears. Another hour, and I discover certain signs of life. A budding forth of love to God, hardly discernible, a tender shoot of affection for all the disciples of Jesus, a love of God's holy word, and ever a yearning to love it more. Come, these are signs of life; for where didst thou get these tender buddings? Yes, my soul, thou art alive, and thy life is everlasting! Fear not, thou shalt yet bud, and blossom, and bear; thy Saviour owns thee; and none shall pluck thee out of his hand.

"Though a thousand foes assailing,
Fill my soul with sad dismay;
Yet, while Jesus firmly holds me,
I shall never fall away."

DEATH'S VISITS TO THE VILLAGE.

A WORD FOR THE CLOSE OF THE YEAR.

THEY say that people live longer in the country than in the town, and perhaps they may a few short years; but be not deceived by the saying, my country friends, for the word of the Eternal is gone forth: "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away," Psa. xc. 10. Neither town nor country can prevent the visits of death.

Death came up the village. It was in the SPRING: the fresh leaves were budding forth, and the snowdrops were peeping out of the ground. He went into the thatched cottage by the ash tree, where sat old Roger Gough in his arm-chair, with his brow wrinkled and his hair white as flax. Roger was taken with the cramp in his stomach, and soon ceased to breathe. "What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?" Psa. lxxxix. 48.

The wheelwright's wife sat with her baby, her first-born, in her lap. It smiled as it lay asleep, and breathed softly. The mother went on mending

stockings, every now and then casting a fond look at her little treasure. That day week its gentle spirit departed, leaving its fond parents half heart-broken. How uncertain is human life! "It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away," James iv. 14.

Death went down the village in the SUMMER. The heavens were bright with sunbeams, and the earth seemed to smile; the gardens were in their glory, and the merry haymakers were busy in the fields. The sexton's son had long been ailing, and all agreed that he could never struggle through the winter. The red tinge on his cheek was not of a healthy hue: consumption had marked him for the grave. He had taken to his bed a fortnight, when his head fell back gently on his pillow, and he went off like an infant going to sleep. "As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone: and the place thereof shall know it no more," Psa. ciii. 15, 16.

Butcher Hancocks was the strongest man in the parish; but he was no match for Death. His chest was broad, his arms were sinewy and strong, and his frame bulky and well knit together. "As hearty as Hancocks," was a common adage. No matter! sickness soon robs the stoutest of his strength, and pulls down the tallest man to the ground. The fever fastened upon him, so that one hour he raged with heat and thirst, and the next his

teeth chattered with cold. His neighbours carried him to his grave. "Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am. Behold, thou hast made my days as a handbreath; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity," Psa. xxxix. 4, 5.

Death crossed the village in the AUTUMN. The orchard trees were bending beneath their load, the sickle was at work among the wheat, and the scythe was sweeping down the barley. Never was known a more abundant year. The loaded teams were seen in all directions, and the gleaners were picking up the scattered ears from the stubble. Farmer Blount was a wealthy man. He was in the cornfield with the reapers, when he suddenly fell to the ground. Some said that he was struck by the sun, and others that it was a fit of apoplexy; but, whatever it was, Farmer Blount never spoke after. You may, perhaps, have seen his tomb by the stone wall of the churchyard, with the iron palisades round it. Truly may each of us say, "There is but a step between me and death," 1 Sam. xx. 3.

Widow Edwards lived in the shed, at the back of the pound. It was a wretched habitation; but the poor cannot choose their dwelling-places. The aged widow had wrestled hard with poverty; her bits and drops were few and far between. Her son, who ought to have been a staff for her old age to rest on, was at sea. He was roving and thought-

-ess; but there is a heartache in store for him on account of his aged mother. Death found the widow alone, lying on her straw. No one was at hand to comfort her, or to close her eyes. "Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come," Matt. xxiv. 42.

Death went round the village in the WINTER. The icicles were a foot long, hanging from the penthouse in the carpenter's yard; and the snow lay here and there in heaps, for it had been shovelled away from the front of the cottages. Not a stone's throw from the finger post at the entrance of the village dwelt Abel Froome, the clerk's father. For years he had been afflicted; but his mind was stayed upon Christ the Rock of ages, and he loved to think of eternal things. He had lived to a goodly old age; and, as a shock of corn ripe for the harvest, he was ready to be gathered into the garner of God. While his days were numbering, his heart had applied unto wisdom; and he knew Him whom to know is eternal life. Death found him sitting up in his bed, with the Bible in his aged hands; and the last words that faltered from his lips were, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation," Luke ii. 29, 30. Thus died Abel Froome. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace," Psa. xxxvii. 37.

The habitation of Harry Tonks was in a wretch-

ed plight when Death crossed the threshhold. Harry was an infidel, and scoffed at holy things. His days were mostly spent in idleness, and his nights in poaching, and in tippling at the Fighting Cocks. Often had Harry defied Death at a distance, as a bugbear; but, when he came in reality, he trembled like a child. Pain racked him, and poverty distressed him; but that was not all; for his conscience was at work within him, and his mind was disturbed. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?" Prov. xviii. 14. It was a horrid sight to see Harry clenching his hands, tearing his clothes, and gnashing his teeth in anguish, and quite as bad to hear the curses he uttered in his despair. He died as the wicked die, without hope, "driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world," Job xviii. 18. "Rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil," Joel ii. 13.

If Death thus goes up and down, and across and around the village, at all seasons of the year; if he takes away the young and the old, the feeble and the strong, the rich and the poor, the righteous and the wicked, how long will he pass by THEE? Is it thy prayer—"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his?" Numb. xxiii. 10. Is Christ thy hope, thy trust, and thy salvation? If so, thou mayst indeed rejoice, and say with exul-

tation, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me," Psa. xxiii. 4.

THE MARINER'S COMPASS.

"Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." —Isa. xlv. 22.

A NEW subject and novel remarks are frequently excellent things; but, as they are not always to be had, it may be well to remember that an old subject, ay! and an old saying too, may at times be made very profitable. One word, then, on the mariner's compass.

The finger of the compass points toward the north. The vessel, by its reeling and tossing, may cause it to quiver and shake, and force it for a time from its natural bent; but, even in its quivering, you may still discover the point from which it unwillingly turns, and when the vessel is again quiet, again will it quickly settle, pointing northward.

Christ is the point towards which the hearts of his people are directed by the hand of God, who

has made them willing in the day of his power. But temptation, sin, and affliction, may toss the followers of the Redeemer to and fro, and for a season force them from their proper position. The world, the flesh, and the devil, may succeed for a time in turning them from the supreme object of their adoration; but, even in the storm of temptation, Christ is the point to which their desires struggle to steady themselves. Yea, and the point to which they shall be steadied eternally, when there is no more rocking in the tempest of this world's tribulation.

THE SMUT IN THE CORN.

When we look around us with an humble and inquiring spirit to obtain knowledge, there are few, if any, of God's works, which will not afford lessons of useful instruction.

During last autumn, I was walking abroad with a Christian friend; and we passed through several corn-fields when the wheat was full in the ear, but not ripe. It was of a grateful green colour, and waved to and fro, as the wind passed over it, like the billowy surface of the sea. The stems were very high, and the crop appeared abundant.

Such a scene brings many a Scripture subject to the mind of a Bible reader. He thinks of the famine in the land of Egypt, when for seven years there was "neither earing nor harvest;" of the sheaves that stood up and made obeisance to the one in the midst, as they appeared in Joseph's dream; of the disciples plucking the corn as they walked through the corn-fields on the sabbath day; of Ruth gleaning in the fields when Boaz gave commandment to his young men, saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not; and let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not;" of the seed sown in good ground, which brought forth fifty and a hundred fold; and of that fearful warning wherein it is said of the Lord of glory, that he will "gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable," Luke iii. 17.

The corn-field was surrounded on all sides with meadow and pasture land, and fine elm and oak trees; so that, with the exception of here and there a farmer's homestead, we could see nothing but the sky above us and the grateful green fields, while silence reigned around. How different was such a scene from the high houses, the thronged pathway, the crowded carriages, and the continual rumbling and rattling of Cheapside, which we had so lately left!

As we passed through the field, my companion

began to pluck some of the wheat ears. He brought half a dozen of them to me, and I much admired them for their beauty and fulness; but, when he told me to press the grains of wheat, I found that they contained nothing but a thick juice of a dark blue colour. Soon after, we met two good-looking farmers, each of them holding a handful of the very same kind of ears.

The truth was, there was a smut in the corn; and my companion and the two farmers knew, by the appearance of the ears, which were good, and which were filled with smut. In a little time, I too, was able to distinguish the difference between the sound ears and those that were smutted. The latter generally appeared as good, and in some instances better than those around them; but the practised eye could discover in them a slight tinge of blue or purple.

This little incident called forth a train of reflections in my mind, strengthening my opinion, that most, or rather all, of God's works may afford us lessons of instruction. For a moment I likened mankind to a wheat field: I looked on human beings as the stems of standing corn, some holding up their heads proudly above their neighbours, some beaten down to the very ground by the storm which had passed over them, and others rustling and bustling, to and fro, as the gale of interest or passion blew.

But it is not the high ear in the corn, nor the low

ear, neither is it the ear that is being blown about, that I wish to speak of. Something may be got from all these; but what can be got, or what can be hoped for, from the ear that is smutted? The rest of the corn will ripen, and the smutted corn will appear to ripen also; but its dark juice will only dry up to a nauseous filthy powder, as black and as bitter as soot. The smutted corn is like a hypocrite, it appears to be what it is not. As the smutted corn is in the wheat-field, so is the hypocrite among mankind.

Whether you know any hypocrites or not, it is very necessary to know that "the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment;" yea, that his "hope shall perish," and that his "trust shall be a spider's web," Job viii. 13, 14; xx. 5.

If you look around you in the world, you will find that those who are upright and honest, are willing to make known what they are, while those who are designing and dishonest take great pains to hide what they are; and the reason is plain; for the better we know an honest man, the more anxious we are to have dealings with him; but the better we know a rogue, the more careful are we to avoid him.

The ignorant quack pretends to be a wise doctor: he boasts of the cures he has performed, and of the sovereign virtue of his worthless physic; he hides his real character.

The swindler puts on a smooth face, bargains for

goods, and talks about prices, jingles the money in his pockets, and promises payment the moment they are delivered, though he never purposes to pay a farthing.

The imposter ties up his leg, or his arm, or pretends to be blind, that he may ask for charity with more success. All these, like hundreds of others, are in disguise; they are deceivers, counterfeits, hypocrites. They are not what they seem to be: they are smutted ears in the corn-field of mankind.

It is bad enough to see hypocrisy around us; still worse to notice it in the same house with us; but worst of all to have it in our own bosoms. How is it with you? Is all right within doors? Are you sound at the core?

To be a hypocrite in the common affairs of life, is bad and base; but to be a hypocrite in holy things, is truly terrible. How severely did the Saviour rebuke hypocrisy! "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanliness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity," Matt. xxiii. 27, 28.

How vainly does the hypocrite persuade himself that he is not known! Dissemble as much as he will, deceive as successfully as he may, there is still a shade of difference between him and those he counterfeits, which may be observed by some of the

quicksighted among men; but, even if he escape the eye of man, how shall he escape the all-discerning eye of God?

He who knows the secret thoughts, who tries the heart and the reins, can distinguish at a glance the good grain from the smutted corn: happy is he who can say with godly sincerity, "I have chosen the way of truth." "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting," Psa. cxix. 30; cxxxix. 23, 24.

We left the corn-field; and no doubt before this the wheat has been cut down by the sickle. It has been gathered into the garner, or piled in the stack-yard; but wherever it may be, the smutted ears are valueless, and indeed, as I was informed, would prove injurious even to the good wheat. The scythe of death will soon cut us down: the upright in heart will be as wheat, the hypocrite as the chaff which the wind driveth away. How fearful, then, the words of holy writ, "He will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire," Matt. iii. 12.

THE SERPENT'S TAIL AND ITS HEAD.

"THE serpent's tail," says Medrash Bamid ben Rabar, "had long followed the direction of the head, and all went on well. One day the tail began to be dissatisfied with this natural arrangement, and thus addressed the head;—'I have long, with great indignation, observed thy unjust proceedings. In all our journeys, it is thou that takest the lead, whereas I, like a menial servant, am obliged to follow behind. Thou appearest every where foremost; but I, like a miserable slave, must remain in the back ground. Is this just? Is it fair? Am I not a member of the same body? Why should not I have management as well as thou?' 'Thou,' exclaimed the head, 'thou, silly tail, wilt manage the body! Thou hast neither eyes to see danger, nor ears to be apprised of it, nor brains to prevent it. Perceivest thou not that it is even for thy advantage that I should direct and lead?' 'For my advantage, indeed!' rejoined the tail. 'This is the language of all and every usurper. They pretend to rule, all of them, for the benefit of their slaves; but I will no longer submit to such a state of things. I insist upon, and will take the lead in my turn.' 'Well, well,' replied the head, 'be it so; lead on.' The

tail, rejoicing, accordingly took the lead. Its first exploit was to drag the body into a miry ditch. The situation was not very pleasant. The tail struggled hard, groped along, and by dint of great exertion got out again; but the body was so thickly covered with dirt and filth, as hardly to be known to belong to the same creature. Its next exploit was to get entangled among briers and thorns. The pain was intense; the whole body was agitated; the more it struggled, the deeper the wounds. Here it would have ended its miserable career, had not the head hastened to its assistance, and relieved it from its perilous situation. Not contented, it still persisted in keeping the lead. It marched on, and at length crept into a fiery furnace. It soon began to feel the dreadful effects of the destructive element. The whole body was convulsed; all was terror, confusion, and dismay. The head again hastened to afford its friendly aid. Alas! it was too late: the tail was already consumed. The fire soon reached the vital parts of the body: it was destroyed, and the head was involved in the general ruin. What caused the destruction of the head? Was it not because it suffered itself to be guided by the imbecile tail?"

Such will ever be the course and end of all who allow bodily passions to take the lead, instead of spiritual affections. "As is the earthly, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly," 1 Cor. xv. 48.

THE IVY.

The hungry man is not over nice in his food. The poor prodigal, when he could no longer ob tain dainty meat, was fain to take up with "husks that the swine did eat." As it is with the body, so is it with the soul. A hungry soul will be glad to get sustenance and strength from the meanest thing under heaven. If a Christian has not the book of God's revelation at hand, he looks at the book of creation. If he cannot admire the all-glorious sun in the skies, he takes up with a tree, a flower, or a leaf, be it green or withered, and sees therein the handiwork of God. The oak tells him to be stable; and the ivy that twines around it is not without its lesson of instruction.

Ivy! thou art ever green,
Let me changeless then be seen:
While my Saviour loves me, ne'er
Let my love grow old and sere.

Ivy! clinging round the tree,
Gladly would I learn of thee,
Clinging, as the year goes round,
To the cross would I be found.

Yes! Come shine or shade, wet or dry, summer's heat, or winter's chilling blast! If the ivy

loses its hold of the tree, it is soon trodden under foot; and if I lose my hold of the cross of Christ, then shall I also perish.

THE TRACKS IN THE CLAY.

On passing along the fields at no great distance from a country village, I came to a narrow neck of ground which was bounded on the one side by a pond, and on the other by a steep rock, but the narrow neck or strip of ground itself was a miry clay.

This miry strip of ground was a sort of defile, a narrow passage from the higher fields and roads to the lower. All the footpaths from the adjoining meadows, and all the lanes from that part of the neighbourhood met there; so that travellers on foot and on horseback, gigs, wagons, and carts; horses, pigs, sheep, and cattle, all had to pass through the defile.

As I paused for a moment, sitting on a stile, and looking down into the defile, I was struck with the numerous tracks or marks left in the clay. Here were the traces of wheels of various kinds; there the iron-shod hoofs of horses and the divided hoofs of cattle had left their impressions; while the foot-

marks of men, women, and children, were clearly discerned. In one place, the ring of a patten marked the clay; in another, the light footprint of a female, who had trodden carefully on her toes, was seen; and in a third, the hob-nailed shoe of a labouring man had pressed firmly and deeply on the yielding clay. A musing fit came upon me, and I thus pursued the current of my reflections.

"This narrow neck of land, this clayey defile, sets forth no unimportant lesson for my consideration; for not only those who have passed this place, but every human being also, leaves a track behind him in the pathway he pursues through the world. It may be light and faint, or it may be heavy and strongly marked, but some trace or other he is sure to leave.

"How many a king has waded 'through slaughter to a throne!' ruled his subjects with a rod of iron, and oppressed those whom he ought to have governed with 'justice, judgment, and equity!' How many a 'hero' has spent his life in the destruction of his fellow-men, shedding the life-blood of countless multitudes, merely to gratify vain glory and ambition! These have left a track behind them by which we trace their unworthy career.

"What a difference there is between the track left by the good man, and the track of the wicked! 'The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble,' but 'the path of the just

is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day,' Prov. iv. 18, 19.

"Look at the track left by the desperately wicked man. In youth, he was idle, and a sloven, a truant, and a speaker of lies. He grew up a drunkard, a sabbath-breaker, and a blasphemer. His occupation was poaching and thieving, till at last, as a murderer, he died on the gallows. You may trace his career in his slatternly wife and vagabond children; every one that speaks of him holds his memory in abhorrence, and you may read his history in the Newgate Calendar.

"The track left behind the kind-hearted Christian is of another cast. He feared God, and delighted in obeying his will; he loved his fellow-creatures, and found pleasure in doing them good. Go to the Sunday-school; every boy knows the kind instructor who gave up so much of his time for his advantage. Go to the almshouse; the widow blesses his memory. Pay a visit to the churchyard, and read the verse inscribed upon his tombstone, 'Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace,' Psa. xxxvii. 37. 'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord,' Rev. xiv. 13. Trace him from his youth to his age; through life and through death. He has left a track behind him by which he is known.

"And now, what track wilt thou leave behind thee? or, rather, what track art thou now leaving behind thee? Will thy memory be blessed or

cursed? The track thou wilt leave, thou art now making; every flying day, every winged hour, is a part of thy brief career. Love God, fear God, obey God, and honour God! Live the life of the righteous, then shall thy latter end be like his. Love even thy enemies; bless them that curse thee, do good to them that hate thee, and pray for them which despitefully use thee, and persecute thee. Do these things, and thy track may be traced with joy; neglect them, and it will be pondered with sorrow."

SINGING.

Though but a poor singer, yet have I a habit of singing when alone. A little thing sets me off—a bit of green on the earth, or a bit of blue in the skies. Yes, yes, I like singing, and often sing with my heart, when my lips are silent. I like to hear a milkmaid sing in the green meadow when her heart is so happy that she *cannot help it.* I love to hear a song uncalled for. *Who asks the birds to sing?* They sing to relieve their hearts, and this is the sort of singing that I like. I love to hear a loud Hallelujah, not by the clear musical voice of

one who is paid for it, but by a thousand tongues singing with the heart and the understanding.

You shall have my favourite song. I sang it in my youth and my manhood, and now I am singing it in my years.

> "When all thy mercies, O my God
> My rising soul surveys,
> Transported with the view, I'm lost
> In wonder, love, and praise."

Many a green field and parched heath, many a hill and valley have been made vocal by the humdrum voice of Old Humphrey. I have sung this song in a loud voice on lonely Salisbury Plain, and in a low voice in crowded Cheapside and the Strand. I have sung it on the mountain top, and a hundred fathoms deep in the heart of the earth—in the ruins of Kenilworth and Tintern, and the palaces of the Tuilleries and Versailles—among the waving woods on the land, and amid the waves of the heaving ocean. Another favourite song of mine is the old hundredth Psalm, composed by John Hopkins, the coadjutor of Thomas Sternhold. For seven years in the days of my youth, I heard it sung on every sabbath, and instead of being weary of the words, unpoetical as they are, I like them better than ever.

> "All people that on earth do dwell,
> Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice:

Him serve with fear, his praise forth tell;
Come ye before him and rejoice.

The Lord, ye know, is God indeed,
Without our aid he did us make:
We are his flock, he doth us feed,
And for his sheep he doth us take.

O enter then his gates with praise,
Approach with joy his courts unto;
Praise, laud, and bless his name always,
For it is seemly so to do.

For why? The Lord our God is good;
His mercy is for ever sure;
His truth at all times firmly stood,
And shall from age to age endure."

Perhaps, you will smile at an old man singing this psalm by himself, as it is more suitable for public worship. Well! well! Let an old man have his own way: it reminds me of old times, and makes me happy. My voice may not be very melodious; but I try to sing with my heart: as the apostle says, "I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also" 1 Cor. xiv. 15.

BAMBOROUGH CASTLE

IN

NORTHUMBERLAND.

As I love to speak well of a poor man, so do I love also to speak in praise of a rich one when I have the opportunity. Whether the object of my praise be clad in lawn or linsey, is of no consequence whatever. One word, then, of the Bishop of Bamborough Castle.

Lord Crewe, Bishop of Durham, to whom Bamborough Castle belonged, has been slumbering in the house appointed for all living, more than a hundred years; and all that I know of him is this, that he was the founder of a noble charity at Bamborough Castle for the succour of ship-wrecked seamen, the education of children, the healing of the sick, and the relief of the poor.

At Bamborough Castle are kept blocks and tackles, warps, cables, anchors, mooring chains, kedges, pumps, and other articles, for the use of stranded vessels, and there are also storehouses for such goods as may be saved. Rooms are kept neatly furnished for the accommodation of ship-wrecked seamen; and, in order that vessels in distress may

be seen, two men patrol the coast for eight miles day and night in stormy weather. When a fog comes on, a bell is rung at the Castle at intervals, and every quarter of an hour a gun is fired as a warning to seamen, and a guide to fisherman in making for the land.

Within the Castle-yard are granaries to store corn: this corn is ground into flour at a mill standing on the cliff, and the poor have it at the cost price: they have groceries, too, on the same terms. At the Castle is a dispensary to supply the poor with medicine, free of all cost, and a surgeon is paid to attend to the ailments of the afflicted. Lastly, there is a library for the use of all within ten miles of the place; twenty girls are boarded, clothed, lodged, and educated, until they are old enough to go to service, and schools are established for the remaining children of the poor.

Now, is not this a noble charity? Tell me not that the see of Durham is the richest of all sees, and that the Bishop of Bamborough could well afford to do all that he did while he was alive, and all that was done by his desire after his decease. I know it well; but I know also that we all have power to be charitable to the bodies and souls of our fellow-beings, and I am afraid that we are much more given to call in question the kindly deeds of others, than we are to imitate them according to our ability. Is there no such a thing, think you, as setting up a Bamborough Castle of our own, on a

small scale? Remember the two mites of the poor widow cast into the treasury. It is not the amount, but the motive. Do we do what we can? I know not how you feel after what I have told you of the noble charity above recorded; but for myself, though its founder, as I told you, has been slumbering in the grave for more than a century, I feel a kindly spirit gathering round my heart, and a sincere and cordial respect for the memory of the Bishop of Bamborough Castle.

UPRIGHTNESS IS TRUE PROSPERITY.

It is a thought worth spreading widely abroad, that of all kinds of work idleness is the hardest; and of all trades, successful villany is the least profitable. No thief plunders another of half the amount of which he robs himself; no men are so poor as the ungodly rich; and none are such errant fools as the worldly wise.

The shrewd, calculating, money-getting miser over-reaches himself; for his wealth, when attained, will not purchase the peace that is enjoyed by the meanest follower of the Redeemer. He gains disquietude, and loses repose; he sows the wind, and

reaps the whirlwind; and he spends money for tha which is not bread, and labours for that which satisfieth not. "There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked," Isaiah xlviii. 22. Well might David exclaim, "I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. For the Lord is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly," Psalm lxxxiv. 10, 11; Prov. xii. 28.

THE MAN IN THE MASK.

If you have never heard of the Man in the Mask, you will think the following narrative somewhat extraordinary. About two hundred years since, the astonishment of the world was excited by the remarkable circumstance of a man in a mask being sent privately to the castle in the isle of St. Margaret in the Mediterranean. This personage wore a mask so contrived that it gave him liberty to eat without taking it off. It was not known who he was even by his keepers; and orders were given to kill him if he should attempt to discover himself. After remaining at St. Margaret for nearly thirty

years, he was removed to the Bastile, at Paris, where he occupied the best apartments; and was treated with such respect, that the governor himself placed the dishes on his table, and stood in his presence. He was refused nothing that he asked for; but the mask was never removed. No one, not even the physician of the Bastile, had ever seen his face. This unknown person died in the year 1704, and was buried at night, in the parish of St. Paul. Monsieur de Chamillard is said to have been the last minister intrusted with this extraordinary secret. When on his death-bed, he was urged to disclose the mystery of the Man in the Mask; he replied that he could not; that it was a secret of state, and that he had sworn never to reveal it.

Now, extraordinary as the circumstance of a man wearing a mask for more than forty years undoubtedly is, yet, when we consider the policy, the reservation, the deceitfulness, the guile, and the double-dealing of the human heart, we must admit, that to find a man that did not wear a mask would be still more extraordinary. Could we but see the weakness of the strong, the ignorance of the learned, the cowardice of the brave, and the folly of the wise; could we only discern the passions and motives that influence the worst, ay and the best of men, from hour to hour, from day to day, and from year to year, we should be compelled to regard every man as wearing a mask, and concealing thereby the real features of his mind. It is a truth, that we hide

more than we reveal; but God seeth through all our disguises; "for his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings," Job xxxiv. 21. "The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart," 1 Sam. xvi. 7.

THE PICTURE FRAME.

"And the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day."—Isa. ii. 11.

I REMEMBER in the days of my youth showing to a friend a drawing of mine, of which I was not a little proud, thinking it to be very well done. It was inclosed in a very pretty frame, which I had chosen to set off my performance to the best advantage. My friend had scarcely glanced at my drawing, when he exclaimed, "Oh what a beautiful frame! where did you get it?" Blushing with mortification, I snatched away my drawing, and could have thrown the frame in the fire at that moment, though it had before given me so much pleasure.

This was a fit of youthful jealousy. I had no objection to have the frame admired; but I could

not bear it to be admired instead of my drawing. Since then I have often been reminded of this fit of youthful jealousy and pride by what I have observed in the conduct of God's people.

When any talk of prayer and praise, of holy feeling and godly meditations, the hearts of true believers respond to these things; but if they see that these are trusted in, as having in the slightest degree part or lot in the matter of justification before God, they cry, "Away with them! away with them."

The gilt frame of a picture is very well as a frame, but it has nothing to do with the merit of the picture itself, nor should Christian gifts and graces ever be put in the place of the one full and free sacrifice offered up by the Redeemer on the cross, for the justification and redemption of his people.

The Lord our God has declared himself a jealous God. He hath created all things in heaven and earth for his well-beloved Son, and he will have him exalted alone in the matter of our salvation.

If prayers, tears, and pious feelings would in any way atone for sin, what need had God to give up his dear Son to die a shameful death? But does not God delight in prayer and praises? Yes: He does delight in them, but he is offended with those who look at them instead of looking to Christ.

It is the Lord Jesus Christ that bore our sins in his body on the tree. He has bought

us, and paid for us with his own precious blood, therefore unto his name be all the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

THE TOOTH-ACHE.

Good and bad thoughts are the seeds of good and bad words and deeds: they multiply, also, our joys and our sorrows. Every day has its shine and its shade, and the same remark may be made of all our joys and all our griefs. Our pleasures are not exempt from inconvenience, nor are our pains unaccompanied with advantage. This ought to be borne in mind more constantly than it is.

No! no! It is not all shadow when we have the tooth-ache. Think of the luxurious feeling when the warm handkerchief, so wishfully regarded, as it hung airing at the fire, comes, at last, to be laid across your cheek, and tied in a becoming bow under your ear! Think of the liberty you enjoy, the cessation from all employment, the exemption from all complaints, but your own, and the kind attentions you receive! No one requires from you the smallest service: while one stirs the fire to make the room warm, another runs to fetch a pillow; a third

toasts the bread for your gruel; and a fourth asks if any thing can be done to make you better? Then, how tenderly every one in the house speaks to you, and in what a subdued and soft tone of voice are you asked every ten minutes, "How are you now?"

Say what you will of the tooth-ache, but these concomitants, these gentle alleviations, are dear to us all. We soon find the difference in our position when we get well again, and we know this, and are not always in haste to proclaim our convalescence. No sooner is it known that our malady has subsided, than the handkerchief is withdrawn, and we must set to work again. No one assists us; no one speaks gently to us; and hardly any one takes notice of us. It is true that our tooth-ache is gone; but it is equally true that with it have disappeared a hundred sources of comfort and complacency.

Let us apply this to our afflictions generally, looking less at our bodily ailments, and more at the spiritual advantages that attend them. God's mercy can make even his judgments a blessing; and by wounding the body, he can heal the soul. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment," may lay a weight of gloom on our minds, but yet it may, by the blessing of our heavenly Father, "work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," 2 Cor. iv. 17.

THE WHETSTONE.

On the top of a hill which forms the boundary to the west of a narrow glen called the Kettles, about a mile to the west of Wooler, on the Scottish border, there are some remains of an encampment. The crag at the south end is called the King's Chair, because a king is said once to have sat there, while his army fought in the glen below. A little to the north of this, is a large stone, which might well be looked on as the parish whetstone, inasmuch as it is worn on every side, just as though a whole neighbourhood had there sharpened their edge tools. But what think you is reported as the real cause of the wearing away of the stone? Why this: that the soldiers of one of the contending armies retired there to sharpen their swords for renewed combat, after they had blunted them so much, in hewing down their enemies, as to have rendered them unserviceable.

We see how soldiers will fight for a little praise, or a piece of money, blunting their weapons against the bodies of their fellow-men, and then sharpening them again to plunge once more amid the bloody strife. How great their toil and danger, and how little their reward! Now, if those who live in strife and contention take such trouble to fit them-

selves to injure others, how much more should Christians exert themselves in doing good! Let us, then, look more closely to our whetstones, where we may rub up and renew our kindly affections one towards another. The house of God, and the throne of grace, should be more diligently sought by us, that an edge may be put on our zeal for the Redeemer's glory, and that our desires may be sharpened after every good word and work.

SUNSHINE.

You are, no doubt, a lover of sunshine. Your eye has brightened while gazing upon the beam that has lighted up the path before you, made the village windows blaze, and put a golden star on the weathercock of the church steeple. That beam has shined into your very heart, and made you feel glad to be alive.

But there is another kind of sunshine that you love. Is there not some beloved friend whose smile is a brighter and dearer sunbeam to you than the brightest beam that gladdens the earth on a summer's day? Yes, it is the smile of a husband, a wife, a sister, a brother, or—well, no matter!—it is

the smile of some dear being, whose every thought is blended with your own, and without whose smile, in the merriest summer time, this would be a gloomy world.

But the shadows of evening have before now closed over the sunshine that has gilded your pathway; and if night has not yet beclouded the sunshiny smiles of those you love, it will do so! there are removals in this world of tribulation that wring the heart! You may have to go and weep in the grave-yard, ere long, where they have laid the object dear to you as your own life!

There is yet another kind of sunshine! delight in that, and no night shall close over it for ever—the sunshine of a Saviour's love in the heart. Clouds may intervene for a time, but those clouds shall pass away; the valley of the shadow of death may seem to shut it out for ever, but that will be only the last cloud breaking away before the dawning of eternal daylight and the blaze of everlasting sunshine: for it is expressly written that, "There shall be no night there," Rev. xxi. 25. Well, then, may the clouds and storms of this life be borne with patient and joyful anticipation.

SYMPATHY FOR SAILORS.

It was a rough night, a very rough night; and I was just retiring to rest, when in an awkward attempt to carry three books into an adjoining room one of them fell to the ground. Picking it up, and examining the opened page, to see if it was soiled, my eye fell on the following paragraph: "I saw a boy climb to the main-top mast; he had been ordered there to secure a loose tackling; he would not have gone there could he have helped it. The night was dark to pitchness; but, by the light of the binnacle, I saw enough to tell me that a tear was rolling down his cheek. There was no moment for delay; the order given must be executed, so away went the boy. It was a boy that had entertained me with everlasting stories of his mother and his home; and who told me of the dread he had that he should never return to them. The boy went up. I watched him at first, and then listened to him: he had gained the first steeple, now flew to the second; had put his foot upon the yard, and grasped the tackling, when—when—but my brain reels; for what I heard was a sudden fall, and then a gurgling in the waters."

Nothing could have been more in character with my thoughts than this affecting narrative, for I was

at the moment reflecting on the dangers of the billow-tost mariner in seasons when landsmen, tucked up in their warm blankets, repose in comfort and security

Very little rest did I obtain that night; for the wind howled and raged as if it had a quarrel with the earth. The thunder, too, roared, the rain descended, the lightning flashed, and I thought of heaving billows, and shattered ships, and shipwrecked seamen. While the storm lasted, oh what sympathy I felt for sailors!

The morning came, the storm was over, the sun shone upon the ground, and when I seated myself at the breakfast-table, my sympathy for sailors was well nigh gone. Thus it is with us all; subjects which ought to lay hold of our very souls, and wring from us strong compassion, are only reflected on when some arresting fact or fiction, or some unusual circumstance brings them vividly to our transitory remembrance. The debt we owe to sailors is great, yet how little we regard it! No wonder that our proverbial neglect of seamen should have called forth the pungent rebuke—

> "God and our sailor we adore
> In times of danger, not before:
> The danger o'er, both are alike requited—
> God is forgotten, and the sailor slighted."

THE BROKEN FINGER-POST.

THINK not that because my hairs are grey, the infirmities of age confine me within doors. No! no! I have been dealt with mercifully; and am often found a long way from my own fire-side.

Some time ago, when travelling in a strange neighbourhood, I came to a place where the road branched off in two opposite directions, so that how to proceed I did not know. It was, indeed, a puzzling situation; for as night was coming on, my taking the wrong road would have been attended with great inconvenience.

At last I perceived a finger-post, which, in my perplexity, I had not noticed: hastening up to it, I read the inscription on the left arm, which pointed towards two distant towns, neither of which I wanted to visit. I then passed round to look at the opposite arm, when lo! it was broken off. "Well, come," said I to myself, taking heart, "I now, at least, know very well the road I am not to go."

We sometimes meet with such difficulties that we seem to come to a stand in our minds, not knowing which way to turn. What to attempt, how to act, and what will be the end of it, we cannot tell: this part of the finger-post is broken off. In such trying and dangerous situations, however, when we might

be tempted to turn aside from the path of duty, God does often so mercifully hedge up some of our ways with thorns, and so instruct us by the directions of his holy word, that if we will but give heed to it, there is a plain warning given of the road we are not to go. This is an unspeakable mercy; let us in all cases turn promptly from the forbidden path, and leave the rest to Him. If we sincerely look to Him, in a child-like spirit, we are sure to obtain the direction he has promised to bestow. He will bring even "the blind by a way that they knew not," and "lead them in paths that they have not known." He "will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight." "Trust," then, "in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths," Isa. xlii. 16; Prov. iii. 5, 6.

THE TIMES.

THE times! the times! We are always talking about them; but though we moralize much, I fear we mend but little. It seems to be a kind of privilege, charter, and birthright among aged people to

praise the past times, and deplore the present; the shadowy future is not so frequently the subject of conversation.

But truly the changes are great that take place from the season of youth to that of grey hairs. In my day, the pulling down of old houses, and the building up of new ones; the deaths of old men, and the coming into notice of young men; the alterations in the customs and fashions that once prevailed, and the changes in the opinions of mankind, have so altered the world, that it is indeed other than it was.

We used to take matters quietly, and move about more at our ease; but now, bustle is the order of the day in all things: whatever we do must be done by steam. Wherever we go, we must go by railroad, and there never was half the ballooning going forward as there is at the present time. Every one once thought that Chimborazo was the highest mountain in South America, and Dhawaligira the loftiest in the world; but now it is found out that Sarato lifts up his head above Chimborazo, and that Chamoulari looks down on Dhawaligira.

But while times, and manners, and customs, and opinions are thus changing, we aged people should be aware that we are changing too. My limbs used to be more active than they are; and my brow was once free from wrinkles. Whether I regard it or not, these grey hairs tell a tale to which I ought to listen. Have the years through which I have

passed been many? the fewer, then, are those that remain to me, and the stronger the reason for my thinking less of seasons gone by, and more of those that are to come. Let me then, amid the alterations of the times, and the sundry and manifold changes of the world, look to Him who changes not, and fix my heart where true joys are alone to be found.

EDMUND HAWKER.

I HARDLY thought, at one time, that Edmund Hawker would outrun Old Humphrey; but it is even so, and he has got clear of the wilderness before me. I know that Edmund was a man of sorrows; but I know too, that every sorrow was weighed out to him, even to the scruple, and that the hand of Him whose name is LOVE held up the balances.

People say that he was poor, and so he was in this world's wealth, and thank God for it; for if poverty heaped upon him many cares, it kept him back from many snares: but, after all, Edmund was a rich man; and I will tell you in what his riches consisted—in his gains and his losses; ay! in his losses, as well as his gains.

Time was, when Edmund was hale and strong, when he had worldly friends, and money in the bank; but his riches made themselves wings, and fled away; his worldly friends forsook him, and sickness pulled down his strength, and made him weak as childhood.

It was a sad loss, you will say, to lose his money! Ay! but it was a gain to Edmund; for it taught him, or rather God taught him by it, not to "trust in uncertain riches," but to lay up for himself "treasure in heaven." Edmund was taught to believe that "Godliness with contentment is great gain;" and that "Better is little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble therewith," 1 Tim. vi. 6; Prov. xv. 16.

Many pitied him when his worldly friends fell away, and said, "This is worse than ever;" but it was the means of teaching him to "cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils." He found that "confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint;" and his heart was turned to that Friend "that sticketh closer than a brother."

When sickness came upon Edmund, many cried out, "It's all over with him now;" but instead of that, it was the best thing that ever befell him. Before he was afflicted, he went astray, but afterwards he took heed to the word of the Lord; so that his poverty made him really rich, and his weakness made him truly strong.

Can he be called a poor man who has a friend in Him to whom belong the silver and the gold, and the cattle upon a thousand hills? Can he be poor who has God's presence and God's grace here, and the promise of beholding God's glory hereafter? No! no! Edmund was a rich man; he lived rich, he died rich: rich in contentment, rich in thankfulness, rich in hope, rich in faith, rich in peace, and rich in rejoicing in Christ Jesus.

Edmund Hawker had his troubles, but they were all sanctified; he was purified in the furnace of affliction; he was tried in the fire, but he came forth as gold. His last days were his best days; for he was taught so to number them as to apply his heart unto wisdom.

Turn over the leaves of Edmund Hawker's Bible, and you will see that it has been read by a God-fearing man: the marks left there will tell you that he heeded God's reproofs, and highly valued God's precious promises in Christ Jesus: these were, indeed, as oil to his joints, and marrow to his bones.

And will you still tell me that Edmund Hawker was poor? Who then is rich? Life is "a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." The world is fading, and the goodliness thereof, with all its riches, will be known no more: then will it be found that heavenly treasure is the only treasure worth possessing.

"That true riches are they which will not pass away,
And true wisdom the fear of the Lord."

AN UNFAITHFUL FRIEND.

Did you ever, by any accident or misfortune, break a tooth, so that the part remaining in the head was as tender as the apple of your eye? If you are as old as I am, most likely you know very well what I mean, without further description. It is of no use being peevish when a tooth gives way through age and infirmity: we should call to mind the service it has rendered us in times gone by, and that may reconcile us to put up with a little inconvenience and pain. But did you ever so far forget yourself as to try to bite a hard crust with your poor broken tooth? I can see you screw up your face at the very thought of it. Why, the pain in such a case runs up to the very brain like lightning. We are poor, impatient creatures; and if it did not please God in mercy to melt our hearts now and then with a sense of his unspeakable goodness, we should be more impatient than we are.

Did you ever, in walking along hastily or carelessly, tread with your foot on one side, and sprain your ancle to such a degree that the weight of an ounce upon it would have made you shout aloud with agony? This is by no means an unlikely case, if you have been a pilgrim for any length of time in the rough and crooked pathways of this un-

even world. Well, then, biting a hard crust with a broken tooth, and trusting your whole weight on a sprained ancle, is just like putting confidence in a faithless friend, when you stand in need of his assistance. You will find the words in Prov. xxv. 19. "Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint," and you will find the meaning of them in your own heart and soul, if ever, in a season of calamity, you lean for support on that pointed spear, an unfaithful friend. Then will you be ready to estimate aright the injunction, "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?" Isa. ii. 22, and to cry out, "He whom I trusted has deceived me! The best of men is but a brier, and the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge," Micah vii. 4.

Let us seek God's grace, that we may never play the part of an unfaithful friend ourselves: and in order to prevent disappointments, let us trust in that "Friend that sticketh closer than a brother," who, among the changes of the world, changes not; but is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." Of Him the poet beautifully says—

One there is above all others,
Well deserves the name of friend,
His is love beyond a brother's,
Costly, free, and knows no end.
They who once his kindness prove,
Find it everlasting love.

BERNARD GILPIN.

Oh how I love to read of a man who has loved mercy, and practised kindness! Bernard Gilpin lived in the reigns of Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth, and obtained by his piety, zeal, and benevolence, the name of "The Apostle of the North." At that time, the feuds and quarrels among the people of the north counties ran high, and very few men had sufficient influence to soften down the angry passions of the people. On one occasion, when Bernard was in the pulpit, two opposing parties met in the church, and there seemed but little doubt that a fray was on the eve of taking place. Bernard descended from the pulpit, and placing himself between the hostile parties, prevailed on them to put off their intended battle till the service should be over. He then exhorted them from the pulpit in so earnest, affectionate, and effectual a manner, that they gave up their purpose of fighting on that day, and also agreed that so long as the good man remained in the neighbourhood, there should be no strife and contention between them.

It is written, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God," Matt. v. 9. Now when we read this text, and when we hear of instances like that related of Bernard Gil-

pin, wherein a kindly spirit has subdued the rage of hot and angry hearts, it should move us to make trial of our powers in the art of peacemaking. It is a noble achievement to bring one to his proper senses who has been beside himself with anger, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness! to take the fire from the inflamed eye, the venom from the stinging tongue, to disarm the uplifted hand, and to change the bitterness of the revengeful bosom into forgiveness and love!

The readiest way to fit ourselves to be peacemakers, is to encourage a peaceable disposition in our own hearts, taking heed to the exhortation of the apostle: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you," Eph. iv. 31, 32.

COMMON OCCURRENCES.

Let me run through a few of the common every-day affairs of life. I lost my way, and was for a time sadly perplexed; but when I regained my path, I could have sung for joy: the wind blew

dust into my eyes, and blinded me; but it only rendered me doubly grateful for my eyesight afterwards: I had travelled far, and felt hunger and thirst; but this made my frugal meal a feast of fat things in my estimation: for a time I was sorely troubled with a fit of the toothache; it passed, and oh, how delightful it was to be at ease! I mislaid my spectacles, and could not see to read the Bible; never was I so thankful for spectacles as when I found them: I was cast down, and brought very low; but I went in my weakness to Him who is strong, and soon felt like a giant refreshed with wine.

Well instructed Christians not only know but feel that all things work together for good to them that truly love God; and they may truly say,

> Our purest pleasures spring from pains;
> Our heaviest losses are our gains;
> Weakness gives strength, peace follows strife,
> And death brings everlasting life.

If winter heightens our enjoyment of spring, summer, and autumn, let us be thankful for winter. If the darkness of the night enhances, in our estimation, the brightness of the day, let us thank God for the midnight gloom. Nothing can be clearer than that the shade is as necessary as the shine, and deprivation as salutary as enjoyment. The trials and perplexities of life are an essential part of God's

mercies, and a Christian man should never ponder on the gloom of earth, without contrasting it with the glory of heaven.

THE GODS OF THE HEATHEN.

THE Egyptians worshipped Osiris, Isis, Typhon, Anubis, Serapis, and Harpocrates. The Persians adored Armuzd, Mithas, and Ahriman. The Hindoos bowed down to Brahma the creator, Seeva the destroyer, and Vishnu the preserver. These, and many other gods, were acknowledged by the Egyptians, the Persians, and the Hindoos.

The Babylonians worshipped Belus; the Canaanites, Philistines, and Syrians, adored Moloch, Baal, Dagon, and Rimmon; the Peruvians bowed down to the sun, moon and stars; and the Mexicans paid divine honours to Vitzliputzli and Kaloc. These, and many other gods, were acknowledged by the Babylonians, the Canaanites, the Philistines, the Syrians, the Peruvians, and the Mexicans.

The Scythians worshipped Tabite, Papius, Apia, Stripassa, Oestosynes, and Thamimasides; the Scandinavians adored Odin, Frea, and Thor; the Celts, whose priests were called Druids, bowed

down to Teutates, Dis, and Andate: and the Greeks and Romans paid divine honours to Cœlus, Terra, Saturn, Jupiter, Neptune, Mercury, Apollo, Mars, Vulcan, Juno, Ceres, Minerva, Vesta, Diana, Venus, Cybele, Pluto, Sol, Bacchus, and Luna. These, and many other gods, were acknowledged by the Scythians, the Scandinavians, the Celts, the Greeks, and the Romans.

Under various shapes, and accompanied with unnumbered abominations, were these idols worshipped. They were formed of gold, silver, brass, iron, wood, and stone. The heathen poured out human blood before them as freely as water, and "sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils," Psa. cvi. 37.

The Egyptians, Persians, and Hindoos; the Babylonians, Canaanites, Philistines, and Syrians; the Peruvians, Mexicans, and Scythians; the Scandinavians, Celts, Greeks, and Romans, of olden times, have passed away, but idolatry has yet its temples on the earth. Reader, leave awhile the heathen, and enter the recesses of thine own heart. Neither Moloch, nor Dagon, nor Ashtaroth, nor Buddha, nor Juggernaut, may have there a shrine; yet may there be a "house of Rimmon" in which thou secretly bowest down! "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," is the commandment of Him whom thou professest to worship. Remember then that selfishness is sin, and that covetousness is idolatry.

The heathen bent the knee to idols in darkness and ignorance; but if thou committest idolatry, it is against light and knowledge. The heathen worshipped gods proverbial for deformity; but if thou bowest down to sin, thou bowest down to an uglier idol than Osiris, Dagon, Baal, Ashtaroth, Moloch, or Juggernaut.

Return, O holy Dove, return,
Sweet messenger of rest;
I hate the sins that made thee mourn,
And drove thee from my breast.

The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from thy throne,
And worship only thee.

THE DEEP PIT.

I REMEMBER reading in a humorous author some pieces of advice on the matter of purchasing a horse. "If you wish to possess a sure-footed animal," says he, "and one that may be relied on, look out for one broken at the knees; for, depend upon it, a horse that has once come down, and broken his knees

against the flints and stones, will not do so again if he can help it."

This advice scarcely agrees with the opinion or practice of those who value themselves on their knowledge of horses and horsemanship; and not being enough of a jockey myself to settle the point, I leave the matter as I find it, contenting myself with applying the principle laid down to men instead of brute animals.

It is said, with some truth, that "a burned child dreads the fire;" and it might be added that a half-drowned man has some fear of the water; by which I gather that both our errors and calamities may, to a certain degree, be corrected and avoided by the penalties and inconveniences they bring upon us.

Very proudly did I once walk along some slippery rocks at the edge of a deep pit. Again and again was I cautioned to be careful, and, in fact, to come away altogether from the place, for it was a dangerous spot, and many accidents had occurred there; but no! Mr. Highmind had too good an opinion of his own care and discretion. Suddenly my foot slipped from under me, and down I came upon the hard and slippery rock.

It was a fortunate thing for me that I succeeded in laying hold of a projecting crag, just as I was sliding into the pit below; for had I not done so, it is hard to say whether I should ever have stood on my feet again. As it was, Mr. Highmind, with all

the humility of a beaten spaniel, crept away from the place on his hands and knees.

Now, though all the cautions of my guide had no effect upon me, my fall cured me at once of my folly. No need was there for me to be exhorted to practise care and caution. I was a perfect pattern of carefulness, a complete model of humility and circumspection: let who would be reckless and careless, Old Humphrey was not one of the number. How full of significancy is that text of the royal psalmist, "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word," Psa. cxix. 67.

There is a pit deeper and more dangerous than the one of which I have spoken, even the pit of destruction. Many regard it at a distance without fear, and others venture on its very brink without apparent concern; but when once a sense of danger gets possession of the soul, what tears are shed, what groans are uttered, and what prayers are offered up for security! Sanctified fear is a costly thing. It was with this conviction on his mind that a Scottish divine put up the following prayer to the Father of mercies, for an irreligious and ungodly king, "Shake him o'er the mouth o' hell but dinna let him fa' in!"

TYRANNY AND OPPRESSION.

It may not be an unprofitable question to ask ourselves if we are not too apt, when we think of tyranny and oppression, to apply these terms to cases wherein the great and the mighty of the earth alone are concerned. Pharaoh, for instance, oppressed the children of Israel, requiring them to make brick without straw; and since then, many other tyrants have ruled the nations under their control with a rod of iron. But instances of tyranny and oppression are continually taking place in the common walks of life. We shall do well not to forget that example in Holy Writ, wherein he who had been forgiven a debt went and took his fellow-servant by the throat, saying, "Pay me that thou owest," Matt. xviii. 23—35.

One of the most striking illustrations of oppression that I ever met with, was in a retired lane in a country village. Passing along a high bank in a field, my attention was drawn to the lane below, by a scuffling noise and a loud barking. Looking down from the bank, I saw a young pointer dog standing before a lamb, and every now and then jumping up at the unprotected animal and laying hold of his nose, or his ear. The dog must have been thus occupied for some time, for the poor lamb

was almost exhausted. You may be sure that I was not long in making the best of my way down from the high bank into the lane, and instructing the tyrant of a pointer dog, in the most summary manner, that though he was stronger than the helpless creature he had so long tormented, he was not beyond the reach of punishment.

There is something so paltry, so pitifully mean in oppressing another, merely because you have the power, that such hateful conduct deserves the severest reprobation. When a master tyrannizes over his servant, when a creditor oppresses his debtor, when a rich man grinds the face of the poor, and one who is strong takes advantage of another who is weak, it is a hateful sight, and highly discreditable to humanity. Never do I witness an instance of this kind without thinking of the poor lamb and the pointer dog.

JEWISH CUSTOM.

A CHRISTIAN man will gladly learn from a Jew aught that will render him more humble in his own estimation. That was a striking custom which the Jews used to observe at their wedding feasts, of the

bride and bridegroom drinking together from the same glass, and then breaking the glass in pieces. This was intended to teach them that all earthly enjoyments are as brittle as glass. Their bosoms might beat, and their eyes sparkle with joy, but the hope of its continuing long was weak as a spider's thread. There is no security but in the favour of God.

Pharaoh was king of Egypt, and reigned proudly, thinking, no doubt, that the crown was firm on his head, and the sceptre safe in his hand; but

> The sceptres and the crowns of kings
> Are frail and insubstantial things.

In the pride of his power, when the strength of his kingdom was brought forth, his captains, his chariots, and his horsemen, he was overtaken by the closing waters of the Red Sea, and overwhelmed with sudden destruction.

Belshazzar was king of Babylon: great was his power, his pomp, and his ambition;

> But royal pomp and kingly power
> Are but the baubles of an hour.

So confident was he of the durability of his greatness, that he made a feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank with his princes, his wives, and his concubines, out of the golden cup of the house of God, and praised the gods of gold, silver, brass, iron,

wood, and stone. But the handwriting on the wall struck him with dismay, and in "that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain," Dan. v. 30.

Herod was the proud and confident king of Judea; but in the midst of his pride and power he was suddenly brought low.

> Alas, how frail, how soon are flown,
> The passing pageants of a throne!

On a set day, when arrayed in his royal apparel, he sat upon his throne, and made an oration to the people. "And the people gave a shout saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost," Acts xii. 22, 23.

With such instances as these before us of the instability of earthly possessions and enjoyments, and the suddenness with which the most highminded and confident have been struck down from the seat of self-exaltation, let us walk humbly with God, and depend entirely on his grace. The broken glass in the nuptial ceremony of the Jew, is a fit subject for the consideration of a Christian.

> For all should know, amid their greatest gains,
> How frail a thread their earthly hope sustains.

FOOD.

THE thought may never have struck you, that it is very possible to be starved to death in the midst of food, and to die of thirst in the middle of the sea; for many kinds of food are no more adapted to the appetite and nourishment of a human being, than the salt water. Give a dog hay, a horse flesh, a cow fish, and a man grass, and they will all soon be in a miserable case.

Now if this be true of the body, it is equally true of the soul. A thriving soul must live on thriving food, and that prayer of Agur the son of Jakeh, "Feed me with food convenient for me," is an excellent one, whether it refer to quality or quantity, Prov. xxx. 8.

If you have ever eaten that which has disagreed with you, I need take no pains to describe the weight, the pain, and sickness of body you have endured. And if you have ever devoured with a greedy mind the doctrines of legality, pharisaism, infidelity, and atheism, you must know pretty well, or if you do not now, you will know some time, the distressing doubt, darkness, disappointment, fear and remorse which such poisonous food occasions to the mind.

We are not sufficiently thankful for the supply

of health, and temporal and spiritual food, which the great Giver of all good has so abundantly provided for us. We have no need to feed on husks, for there is a fatted calf prepared for us by our heavenly Father. While the ground brings forth fifty and a hundred fold, while the trees bend beneath their summer and autumnal load, and while the creatures of the land and the water are given us for food, shall we do well to reject them, and to gather the poison berries of the hedges to assuage our hunger? While the records of eternal truth, the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ, is within our reach, shall we act wisely in taking up with the vain refuges of lies, and the idle dreams and dogmas of mutable men? Oh no! let us feed on food convenient for us, and let our souls prosper in banqueting on the word of God; for "the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward," Psa. xix. 7—11.

Have a care of high seasoned and exciting food, whether for the body or the soul. Who so tongue-

valiant and reckless as the drunkard in his cups? and who so faint-hearted and cowardly at other times? Who so confident of heaven, as he who would get there by his own deeds? yet who so fearful of hell when he comes to die? Healthy spiritual food keeps the spirit humble. The humble soul standeth, because it taketh heed lest it should fall; it walketh uprightly, because it feareth the Lord: and it exults without danger, because it rejoices with trembling.

AGED CHRISTIANS.

EXPERIENCE has taught me that few things have a stronger tendency to confirm the wavering, to raise up the spirits of the desponding, and to establish the faith of the steadfast among the people of God, than a visit to the habitations of such aged Christians as have borne the heat and the burden of the day, and are about to enter into the joy of their Lord. The youthful traveller is apt to presume on his strength: but he is ignorant of the rough places and thorny pathways he has to tread; he knows not the trying influence of the sultry sun, and the wintry blast, with which the way-faring man has to

contend. The young recruit, ardent in spirit, listens to the inspiring sounds of the drum and the trumpet, and dreams of nothing but victory: the toilsome march, the weary midnight watch, the bloody struggle, and the carnage of the battle-plain, are unknown to him. And so it often is with the youthful Christian: he feels equal to any trial; he is ready to make any sacrifice; and is willing, like Peter of old, to die rather than deny his Master. But alas! alas! the faintings, the haltings, the backslidings of Christians, are enough to make us tremble while we rejoice in the hope set before us. And therefore it is that I say, few things are more calculated to give real encouragement and strength to the seeking soul, than a visit to the habitation of those who have endured the burden and heat of the day; whose loins are girded; and whose staves are in their hands; ready, willing, and anxious to depart, and to enter into the promised land.

Such were my thoughts as I walked away from the humble habitation of an aged servant of God, whose soul has long magnified the Lord, and whose spirit is usually occupied in rejoicing in God her Saviour. I found her heavily burdened with the bodily afflictions of more than four-score years. Her comforts were few, and of the plainest kind; and the greater part of the day, and the whole of the night, she always passed alone. There she sat in her arm chair, almost bent double, sorely oppressed with disease, tormented with acute pain;

but, in the darkness of her affliction, her eye and her heart were alike fixed on the Star of Bethlehem. "One thing," said she, "troubles me; I find it hard to 'glory in tribulations.' I can say 'It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good;' and I know that in faithfulness he has afflicted me; but still I find it hard to 'glory in tribulations.' No one but God can enable us to rejoice in the furnace. St. Paul spoke of 'light affliction;' but I feel that mine is very heavy, and is only light when compared to the glory which shall be revealed: but, blessed be God, this does not weaken my faith in the gospel of Christ; for I know of a surety that 'it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.' The foundation standeth sure, 'I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day,'" 2 Tim. i. 2.

Then she spoke of the goodness of God towards her, that in the midst of her transgressions and infirmities she had been kept from bringing a reproach on the people of God. Then she dwelt on the abundant mercies of which she had been an unworthy partaker all her life long, until, at last, her spirit revived afresh, and she did indeed rejoice in the Lord, and glory in the God of her salvation.

This is the way in which it pleases a gracious God to uphold (in the feebleness, and infirmities, and afflictions of age) the hope, and the faith, and the joy of his people. It is a pleasant thing to con-

verse with the youthful Christian, while he drinks of the "brook by the way," and ardently pursues his heavenly course; but it is more abundantly profitable to hear the heart-pourings of the aged, who are on the threshold of eternity, and to whom the everlasting gates are about to be lifted up, that they may have an abundant entrance into everlasting life.

When flesh and heart are failing fast,
And hope has almost fled away;
E'en in that trying hour, at last,
The Lord their God becomes their stay.

THE TOO HASTY REPROOF.

"NEIGHBOUR," said I, to one of my friends who lives near me, "you have sadly splashed your stockings! In the state in which the roads now are, a little care is required in crossing them, which care, it is very plain, you have not exercised. If you were a little more careful, your appearance would not be a whit the less respectable."

My neighbour civilly thanked me for my very excellent advice, and then added that as I had so narrowly scrutinized his stockings, it would do me no harm to take a glance at my own. This I im-

mediately did, and found to my confusion, that if he had been in the mud, I had as surely been in the mire. How it happened, I cannot tell; but certain it is that I was by no means in a fit state to call him to account in the manner I had done. However, this advantage attended the affair, that I resolved another time to give a sharp look-out for my own imperfections before I ventured to rebuke those of another.

> "O wad some power the giftie gie us
> To see ourselves as others see us,
> It wad frae mony a blunder free us,
> And foolish notion."

If it were only half as easy to amend ourselves, as to reprove others; and if in giving advice we could secure the benefit we are so intent to confer on our neighbours, how often would Old Humphrey be spared the mortifying reflection that he was scattering abroad what was wanted at home. Only two days ago, while in the very act of recommending more care to a servant who had upset a saltcellar, he knocked a drinking-glass from the table with his elbow, and broke it to pieces.

WHAT GOOD CAN I DO?

"WHAT good can I do?" is an observation more frequently made by such as wish to excuse themselves from doing good, than by those who sincerely desire to effect it. This is much to be regretted, because it is next to an impossibility to be in a situation wherein we can do no good. He who really wishes to do good, may do something.

If by doing good we mean something unusual, something great, something that people may talk about, we certainly may not have it in our power to perform it; but to do good on a small scale, is in the power of every one.

When the poor widow, mentioned in the New Testament, could not put a large sum into the treasury, she cast therein two mites: and it was said of her, that she had done more than others, because they had only given of their abundance, but she of her poverty. You must be poor indeed if you cannot spare two mites in a case of necessity.

When the Lord of life and glory speaks of the recompence that shall attend acts of Christian kindness, he does not say a bag of money, or a goblet of wine shall be recompensed, but, "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily

I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward," Matt. x. 42. You must be ill provided for, indeed, if you cannot command a cup of cold water!

It is the will, and not the power, that is wanting; for every human being that breathes, and possesses the use of his faculties, may do good. Look around you for opportunities of usefulness; for sometimes, if you cannot do a kind deed, yet a kind word, ay, even a kind look will be useful. A small kindness, if well timed, may be more useful than a great one performed without consideration.

No sooner did the Philippian jailor in sincerity exclaim, "What must I do to be saved?" than an answer was given to him, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house," Acts xvi. 30, 31. And no sooner shall you, with equal sincerity, ask, "What good can I do?" than opportunities will present themselves on every hand, and you will be ready to acknowledge, that he who really desires to do good, may be useful.

THE NATURAL CREATION.

A THOUGHT to a thoughtful man is somewhat like a meal to a hungry man; for the mind requires food as well as the body. He who can see nothing but wisdom, and power, and beauty in the natural creation, knows not half its value. Good it is to regard in the works of God the power and wisdom of God, and to gaze with delight on the transcendent beauty that decorates earth and heaven; but he who would drink deeply of that spirit of thankful delight which the true lover of nature enjoys, must be keenly susceptible to the goodness and love so universally mingled with the visible creation.

A voice has gone forth that nature shall be felt as well as seen by man; that it shall harmonize with his affections, be accommodated to the moods of his mind, and blend with his very being.

> "To him who, in the love of nature, holds
> Communion with her visible forms, she speaks
> A various language; for his gayer hours
> She has a voice of gladness, and a smile
> And eloquence of beauty; and she glides
> Into his darker musings with a mild
> And gentle sympathy, that steals away
> Their sharpness ere he is aware."

The rising sun is in unison with the energy of

man; the kindling skies call forth his imagination; the buds and flowers animate his hopes, and the sere leaf and the soft shadows of evening move him to salutary reflection. When he feels at ease, the motionless mead, the silent rural scene, and the still waters, are as music to his emotions. And when he walks abroad, at war with himself, fevered with wrong, wounded by calumny, or stung with self-reproach, the waving trees and murmuring rills are peacemakers; the very hues of creation are oil and balm to him; there is mercy in the cool greens of earth, and the mild blues of heaven, for they calm his troubled spirit, and soothe him to repose.

As an old man, I speak feelingly and gratefully on this subject; for few have revelled more freely amid natural scenery than Old Humphrey; and none are more indebted than he to its health-giving properties and peace-restoring powers. Those who have no relish for nature's banquets will do well to endeavour to attain it; and to him who possesses it, and yet guiltily foregoes his opportunities of visiting the country, I would say, in the words of the poet:—

"Oh how canst thou renounce the boundless store
Of charms that nature to her votary yields?
The warbling woodland, the resounding shore,
The pomp of groves, the garniture of fields,
All that the genial ray of morning gilds,
And all that echoes to the song of even;
All that the mountain's sheltering bosom shields,
And all the dread magnificence of heaven;
Oh how canst thou renounce, and hope to be forgiven?

Courage, Christian! Creation tells us that there is a God, good, and great, and glorious! and Revelation tells us, that "this God is our God for ever and ever," Psa. xlviii. 14.

THE PEDANT.

ARE you open to reproof? for if so, there is hope of amendment in every error; but if you are obstinate and high-minded, you are in a pitiable case.

We are told that a pedant, being shipwrecked, and seeing every one around him clinging to something to keep himself afloat, laid fast hold of *one of the anchors.*

This story at first seems a little extraordinary. That a man vain of his knowledge should manifest such extreme simplicity and folly, is hardly to be believed; but if we look about us in the world, and regard the actions of mankind, or examine narrowly the errors of our own hearts, we shall not be quite so much surprised at the pedant's absurdity.

It is very true that the man of books, in his eager desire to preserve life, adopted the readiest means to ensure his destruction; but it is equally true that we are continually committing acts of folly and incon-

sistency. Heirs of immortality as we are, we cling to the things of time, set our hearts on uncertain riches, and for the temporal accommodation of our bodies, endanger our very souls.

Where is the man who does not give way to anger while he seeks for forgiveness? who does not practice severity while he hopes for mercy? and indulges pride while he praises humility? We ask for God's gifts, and then deem them our own acquisition. We claim his promises, while we neglect his precepts; and petition for his grace, while we are unmindful of his glory.

Angels may look down with wonder on the aspiring pretensions and low deserts of men, marvelling at our inconsistency. Do we not trust the weakness of a spider's thread, and doubt the strength of a cable? Do we not let go a substantial good, and grasp at a fleeting shadow? and rely on the opinions of our fellow-men, while we call in question the truth of the word of God?

In short, what shall we say of our own folly and inconsistency? for we prepare to reap where we have not sown; prefer temporal honours to an eternal crown; and bind ourselves to the earth while we are looking for heaven!

THE HILL GOOD HOPE.

Did you never, after toiling up a steep hill, sit yourself down, or stand still for a season, to take breath, and to look around you? No doubt you have, and it is just the same with the pilgrim Zion-bound. He trudges on through brake and brier, mud and mire, over hard rock or stony ground, as the case may be, toiling and panting; but when once he arrives at the top of the pleasant hill called Good Hope, he makes a stand.

This eminence is not a pile of rubbish of his own scraping together, but one of the King of Zion's own hills; and standing, as it does, right in the highway in which he trusts to travel till he enters the golden city with the jasper walls, why he feels disposed to lay down his staff, to rest himself for a season, and enjoy the goodly prospect before him.

There is many a rising ground in a pilgrim's path, where he gets a breath of pure air, and a glance at goodly objects; but he never can be in good spirits till he stands on the top of the hill Good Hope. The Garden of Gethsemane, and the Mount of Olives, and the Hill of Calvary, are all seen from this place, as well as the spot where the angel rolled back the stone from the door of the sepulchre. A glance may be had, too, of the peace-

ful valley where David composed that sweet psalm, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters," Psa. xxiii. 1, 2; and the city of cities, whose walls have twelve foundations, is seen in the distance.

The heat and burden of the day are yet to be borne. Many a battle is to be fought, and many a victory is to be won; but the pilgrim is so much comforted by his temporary rest, and the fresh air, and the goodly prospects from the hill Good Hope, that he enters again on his pilgrimage, feeling like a giant refreshed: taking up his staff he journeys on, singing the song of Moses of old: "The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation," Exod. xv. 2.

KINDNESS.

In a world wherein even the heirs of eternal life have so much of tribulation to endure, how desirable is a spirit of kindness, to relieve, to support, and to assist each other in our pilgrimage to heaven. There are few hearts so hard, few spirits so churlish, as not to be affected by kindness. A kind

thought is influential, a kind word is encouraging, and a kind deed is at all times a blessing.

Many years ago, I spoke a few kind words to a young woman who was in ill health. The words were but few; but though years rolled along, they were never forgotten. The poor girl remembered them; and, when stretched on her deathbed, she expressed an earnest desire to see me. I went directly; when she told me, that the words I had spoken to her when unwell, many years ago, had led her to believe that I would not be unwilling to render her a deed of kindness in her dying hour.

The young woman was looking forward to an eternal world, with a mind rightly directed to the Friend of the contrite in heart, who can support those who trust in Him, in death as well as in life. But one thing lay heavy on her mind: she had for some time been at variance with a friend who had judged her unjustly, and treated her hardly. This had led her to unkindly feelings. To forgive and be forgiven, and to die in peace with her estranged friend was the desire of her soul. I think that I was eloquent in pleading her cause, for I brought her erring friend a contrite penitent to her dying bed. They wept, they prayed, they forgave each other; they read the words of God together; and, in a few days, with a mind impressed with a sense of God's abundant mercy in Christ Jesus towards her, the young woman died in the presence of her reconciled friend, calmly and confidently committing

her spirit into the hands of her Redeemer. I saw her dust committed to the ground, and never have I passed her grave without calling to remembrance the exhortation, "Be kindly affectioned one to another!" Rom. xii. 10.

How many a life has been beclouded! how many a death has been rendered unhappy by unkindness! If we hope for mercy, we should show mercy. If we have received kindness, we should render kindness to others. Let us take a review of our past lives, and see if there have been no unkind words on our part that we can recall? no unkind deeds for which we can atone? We ought, unquestionably, to live in peace with God, and in charity with all mankind; and if we think aright of the amazing grace of the Redeemer, in pardoning our manifold offences, we shall be desirous to obey his merciful exhortation, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you," Matt. v. 44, bearing in mind the affectionate ejaculation, "Be kindly affectioned one to another."

SUBMISSION.

I REMEMBER hearing of a dear lover of books, who had his library burned down to the ground. When his friends expressed their surprise that he should bear his loss with so much calmness, his reply was, "I must have learned but little from my books if it has not taught me to endure the loss of them."

I remember hearing of another who had reason to expect that his dying brother would leave him a large fortune. "Your brother is dead," said the executor, "but he has not left you a single sixpence of his property." "If God had not known that I could do better without it than with it," was the reply, "I should have had it every penny. It might have given me many enjoyments on earth, but it would surely have hampered me on my way to heaven: I thank my heavenly Father for ridding me of the burden."

I remember, also, hearing of a third who, when told that his enemies had taken away his oxen, his asses, and his camels; that fire had fallen from heaven and consumed his sheep; that his servants had been slain with the edge of the sword; and that a great wind had blown down a house on the heads of his children, and killed them—replied, "The

Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

Now what is the use of hearing about such instances of submission to the will of God, if they leave us as impatient under troubles, and as repining under losses as they find us? These things should be as medicine to our minds, oil to our joints, and marrow to our bones. Oh for the spirit of some who have gone before us, who have borne affliction without murmuring, taken joyfully the spoiling of their goods, endured meekly and patiently the bitterness of persecution, even to death, and accounted all things but loss in comparison with the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

REST.

"I HAVE had no rest now," said an aged and afflicted servant of God, "for nine days. I have had no rest," said she, "night or day; and I long for rest: yea, I long to enter into that rest which remaineth for the people of God."

As I knew that her mouth was usually filled with praises, for she was one of those cheerful Christians who are always singing of mercy, I could not but

enter deeply into her affliction, and this led me to ponder afterwards on the blessing of *rest*.

If we valued our common mercies more than we do, we should love God better than we do; and the grace of our Redeemer would be more abundantly acknowledged in our lives and conversation. If the value of food is taught us by our feeling the want of it, and the value of clothing increased by our not being able to procure it, how grateful are we for food and raiment! If the air which we breathe, and the water that we drink, become tainted, how grateful are we for fresh air, and pure water! As it is with other mercies, so is it with the blessing of rest. When labouring under anxiety of mind, or pain of body, we vainly strive in the night season to slumber: when we watch in disquietude, and water our couch with our tears, oh how earnestly we desire to partake of rest!

I remember that a man died, in the days of my youth, who had the character of being a very wicked man: several of his neighbours attended him during his sickness, until, at last, there were few who dared to remain by his bedside. The cottage in which he dwelt stood on a lonely common; and the wretched man used to start up in bed at night, and point in a hurried manner to different parts of his room, where he said the wicked one was waiting for him. Many fearful nights were passed in this manner, without his closing his eyes in slumber. After his death, I heard those who attended

him talking together of his terrors: they described his afflictions as being very heavy; but what impressed my mind more than any thing else which they said was, that "the miserable man could never get any *rest*."

What would not that wretched being have given for one hour of the peaceful slumber that we so commonly enjoy! If we enjoy the blessing of rest and peace through the hours of darkness, and have never offered up thanks and praises in an especial manner for these mercies, it is time to offer them up now.

Who is there who would give up his peaceful slumbers to possess the wealth of the world? Alas! whatever a man may possess, though gold and silver fill up his chests, though he possess every earthly enjoyment, that man must still be wretched indeed who has not *rest*.

Let us think of these things, that we may be grateful together for the *rest* appointed to us on earth: and earnestly pray that our hearts may be made willing to accept the merciful and gracious invitation of our compassionate Saviour Jesus Christ, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you *rest*," Matt. xi. 28.

BRINKBURN PRIORY.

Brinkburn Priory, in Northumberland, dedicated to St. Peter, was founded in the reign of Henry I., by William de Bertram, Baron of Mitform, who established there Black Canons, or Canons Regular of the order of St. Augustine. The baron endowed the priory with lands out of his wastes. Now tradition tells us that, on a certain occasion, a Scottish army which had made an incursion or inroad into England, in returning homeward passed near to Brinkburn without observing the priory. The monks congratulating each other in having escaped that pillage with which the neighbourhood had been visited, in their excess of joy, set about ringing the bells. This imprudence proved to them an unfortunate affair; for the Scots, not being out of hearing, immediately turned back and plundered the place.

As the chemist extracts medicinal properties from the varied plants that flourish around him, so a wise man endeavours to gain profit from the varied events which become known to him. What think you of the conduct of the monks of Brinkburn Priory? Do not their infirmities remind you of your own? Have you never cried out too hastily, thinking that you had escaped a dangerous temptation, or overcome a besetting sin; bringing upon you by your

unguarded security, and untimely and imprudent exultation, the very evil which had almost passed by?

Whether this is your case or not, with sorrow and shame I confess it to be mine. Again and again, like the Brinkburn monks, have I proudly rejoiced in deliverance from faults and infirmities, and again and again has the enemy come in like a flood, overwhelming me with confusion, and leaving me in the deep waters of trouble and despondency. Say what we may, do what we will, there is no safety but in dependence on God, and lowliness of mind. It would do us no harm to repeat every day in the year, and every hour in the day, that too neglected text, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble," James iv. 6.

ARE YOU READY?

The gates of the burial-ground of Bunhill-fields were open; a hearse and four horses stood near, with a long line of mourning coaches, and a coffin, covered with a pall, was conveyed to the silent tomb. As the mournful procession moved slowly through the gateway, the passer-by was obliged

either to cross the street, or to wait till the mourners had entered the burial-ground. At this moment, a working-man, with a paper cap on his head, in crossing the street, accosted a companion whom he met with the words, "Are you ready?" As he spoke, he turned a significant glance on the funeral procession, and gave a shrug with his shoulder, by which I understood he meant to inquire if his companion was ready to be carried to the grave. The question was put in a lightheated, thoughtless spirit; and his companion replied, "Not yet!" The question and the reply occupied my reflections for some time after; and I thought to myself, How many there are among us, were the same inquiry to be made, who would answer, "Not yet!"

I well knew a minister, a man of unusual talents, and of great integrity, who, after preaching the gospel more than thirty years to a large congregation, met with a serious accident, which placed his life in danger. He thought that he was about to enter into an eternal world, but, alas! he was not ready! I heard him declare from the pulpit, with great humility, this fact. "Yes," said he, "often as I have urged you to prepare for death, I acknowledge with shame that *I was not ready!*"

Are you ready? is a heart-searching question; for no one can be ready to leave this world until he has a well-founded hope of a better, a hope that rests on Christ, and on Christ alone. *Are you ready?*

THE ROBIN AND THE SPARROW.

Whether, O Lord, we gaze around
On earth, or air, or sea;
Some proof of love may still be found,
To lead our hearts to thee.

MANY years ago, a robin built her nest among the pipes in the middle of an organ, in the orchestra of a public garden. The organ was played upon many hours in the course of each day by different persons who visited the gardens, as well as on public nights, but the little trembler deserted not her nest. I saw her repeatedly, with distended breast, sitting over her eggs when the full power of the organ was called forth, joined with the voices of public singers; but, faithful to her trust, she maintained her position, and the clamour was ineffectual to drive her from her charge.

Is there nothing, Christian, to be learned from the poor bird? Hast not thou, also, something committed to thy care, which it behooves thee never to forsake? If God has been gracious to thee, if thou hast the hope of eternal life through the merits of thy Redeemer, does it not become thee to hold fast thy profession in godly sincerity? to bear the clamour and resist the temptations of the world, and to endure to the end? Let the red-breasted bird re-

mind thee of thy mercies, and strengthen thy desire to retain them.

A sparrow built her nest inside a pump, that stood in my father's garden: the iron-rod communicating with the bucket passed through the centre of the nest. Some of the eggs were broken before the nest was discovered, the others were hatched. It was a novel sight, when the top of the pump was removed, to see the little prisoners huddled together in their gloomy abode. One or two of the young ones were crushed by the working of the pump-rod; the remainder, surrounded by difficulty, danger, and death, were not abandoned by the parent bird, but at last, winged their way to fairer prospects.

Have not Christians, also, a Parent, a heavenly Parent, who will not forsake them in tribulation, danger, and death? God is faithful to his people, and what he has promised, he is able to perform, Rom. iv. 21. "Fear ye not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows," Matt. x. 31.

THE SWALLOWED BIBLE.

In the days of my boyhood, my father told me that he knew an old man who had swallowed a Bi-

ble. This greatly excited my astonishment, and I wondered how it could be. My father, who had an object in view in keeping me in ignorance of what he meant, never explained the matter to me; but went with me, some time afterwards, to call upon the old man. Many a thoughtless prodigal has been cut off since then, and many a pardoned sinner entered into the rest that remaineth for the people of God; yet do I remember it as well as though it happened but yesterday. Oh how graciously did texts of Divine truth fall from the lips of that aged servant of Christ; for the Holy Scriptures dwelt in him richly in all wisdom; his Bible seemed to be a mine of illimitable value, a storehouse of precious things, and he drew them forth liberally, like one who draws water from a well that he believes to be inexhaustible.

As we came away, my father said to me, "Well, and what do you think of this man having swallowed a Bible?" "Think, father!" said I, "why I think that he has indeed swallowed a Bible; for the word of God seems like meat and drink to him."

Oh that the blessed book of truth were meat and drink to us all! Oh that we had all swallowed a Bible, for then should we find it, not bitter like the little book eaten by John in the Revelation, but sweeter than honey and the honey-comb.

AN ENEMY.

WHETHER you are a poor man, or a poor woman, getting your bread by the sweat of your brow, or aged and infirm living in a cottage, let me remind you that you have AN ENEMY!

Be upon your guard; for unless you are so every moment of your time, depend upon it, he will do you an injury.

This enemy is not in another country, nor at a distance from you; he does not live in one place while you dwell in another. He is in the same dwelling, occupies the same chamber, and is indeed your most intimate acquaintance.

If he would attack you openly, you might resist him in many ways, you might ask others to assist you, or you might get out of his way, but these things you cannot do; for, though he is such an enemy, he contrives to persuade you that he is your best friend! He has abused the confidence you have put in him. He has led you into evil, he has deceived you, he has robbed you, and placed poison in your basket and in your store. In short, there is hardly any bad deed which he has not, at one time or other, either done, or persuaded you to do.

Now this enemy is, as I said before, the nearest acquaintance that you have. It is not your father,

nor your mother, nor your sister, nor your brother, but a part of yourself—*It is your own heart.*

Think for a moment of the deceit this enemy has practised against you. He has persuaded you to disobey God's will, that you might indulge in your own; to seek for happiness in sin, which never yet failed to produce sorrow; to set your affections on a poor perishing world that is passing away, and leave unsought that eternal inheritance which is in heaven. Truly, "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Jer. xvii. 9.

Think how this enemy has robbed you of your peace of mind, by prevailing on you to commit iniquity; for sinners are always unhappy. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked," Isa. lvii. 20, 21.

Think how he has poisoned your enjoyments, by depriving you of the comfort of God's promises in Christ Jesus, by bringing you into a state of condemnation; for "the soul that sinneth, it shall die," Ezek. xviii. 4. How many fears and forebodings has he brought upon you of God's displeasure and eternal wrath! If you have never thought on these things, think of them now.

Should you be in doubt, whether the heart is so wicked as I have represented it to be, hear what the word of God says about it, that word which cannot

lie: "From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man," Mark vii. 21—23.

This picture, frightful as it is, is faithfully drawn, and is, indeed, enough to terrify any one who looks upon it.

And can you, after all this, consider your heart as a friend, unless it be changed? If you can, you must be content to endure all the miseries it will bring upon you. "Be sure your sin will find you out," Num. xxxii. 23.

But if you are convinced that your heart is evil, and not to be trusted, (he that trusteth his heart is a fool,) why then hasten to Him who alone can restrain the unruly wills and affections of sinful men. Go unto the Lord Jesus Christ, the sinner's Friend, and pray, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me," Psa. li. 10, and be assured that your prayer will be heard. God has promised to those who seek his grace, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh," Ezek. xxxvi. 26. This is the promise of God, and not a jot or tittle of his promises shall fail; for they are yea and amen in Jesus Christ.

THE HAPPY CHILDREN.

THERE are moments when the most buoyant hearts, the most elastic spirits, are bowed down, and it was so with me yesterday, when I walked abroad. The sun shone, and we all love sunshine, the wind blew, and I delight in a high wind, yet still I began to be cumbered with many cares, and my heart sank within me.

As I continued my walk, brooding on trifling vexations and imaginary evils, I came suddenly to a turn in the lane, where two ragged lads were amusing themselves; the one swinging the other to and fro on a gate. They were both of them highly delighted, and the one on the gate at least was as happy as a king.

He sat on the topmost bar, holding it with his hands, while his toes were tucked in between two of the bars below him, that he might not fall. His face was unwashed, and his hair uncombed; his stockingless feet came through his shoes, and his ragged raiment fluttered to and fro in the wind: but these things troubled him not; for every time the rattling gate was banged against the gatepost, he burst into a roar of laughter.

"Oh," thought I, "and can happy-hearted childhood, with scanty blessings, revel in mirth, and in-

dulge wildly in unrestrained merriment, and age, surrounded with unnumbered mercies, give way to repining and despondency? Shame, shame upon me!" Again I looked at the young rogues at their pastime, and heard the wild laugh of the happy urchin exalted on the gate. The sunshine that beamed on my head seemed to enter into my heart; the wind that blew around me raised my spirit, and I began to sing of mercy. "O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms," Psa. xcv. 1, 2.

THE WANDERER WITHOUT A GUIDE.

I HAVE just been reading of one who climbed the Cheviot Hills, taking a guide with him to direct him the road. No sooner had he gained the summit, than finding the prospect fair, and desiring to be at perfect liberty, he sent away his guide. Alas! for a thick mist soon came on, and though he had found his way up the hills with a guide, he could not

find his way down the hills without one; so that midnight found him wandering alone and in darkness, bewailing his folly.

I am afraid that our Cheviot friend is not the only one, by a great number, that has fallen into this mistake. Many—and my mind sadly misgives me, that he who is now noting down this remark is among them—many are more fond of guiding others, than of being guided themselves. Where there is one of us deceived by a too humble estimate of his acquirements, there are ten led astray by a proud opinion of their qualifications.

If it was unwise to wander alone on the Cheviot Hills, having no guide at hand in case of difficulty or danger, how foolish will it be in the Christian to dispense with his guide in crossing the hills and the valleys which lie between him and the end of his pilgrimage! What are the mists of the Cheviot Hills compared with the obscurity that ever and anon awaits him? There are bogs and quagmires, brakes and briers, quicksands and miry sloughs, stumbling-blocks, and horrible pits in his path, that, without a guide, he can hardly hope to escape. Christian pilgrim, is the map of the road in thine hand? Is the Book of books read by thee with a desire for instruction, and consulted by thee in every emergency, with humility, prayer, hope, faith, and confidence? Cast not from thee this guide of thy youth and thy age; so shalt thou be led safely through the mists which rise around thee; so shall

the crooked ways of thy pathway be made straight, and the rough places plain.

THE OAK.

"Do you not think," said a friend to me, "that the oak yonder, is a very fine one?" I thought it was. "And do you not think that the trunk is very sound?" I certainly believed it to be so; but what was my surprise, when I went up close to the tree, and looking on the other side, found out my mistake.

Though the oak was fair to the eye on one side, and put forth goodly branches and abundance of foliage, yet on the other, it was altogether decayed away. It was not merely hollow, but the whole side of the tree was gone, bark and stem, and even the inside of the part that looked well was like touchwood, with thousands of small round holes made by insects and worms, so that it seemed as if it had been pierced with shot in all directions. Many a decayed tree have I seen in the course of my life, but never one which so much deceived me as this gnarled oak.

We stood looking at the tree for some time, as it seemed to set forth a useful lesson. There it was, with its best side towards the foot-path. It looked fresh and green; it put forth its leaves, it bore acorns, and oak-balls, and yet it had no heart: it was rotten at the core.

Most likely the gnarled oak has deceived hundreds of people; for the passer-by would hardly suspect that so good-looking a tree would turn out to be so greatly decayed and perished. How is it with you? Have you been a deceiver? It is possible that you have deceived others, and yourself too; but it is not possible for you to have deceived God.

The gnarled oak, fair and flourishing as it now appears, is not likely to stand many years longer, for it has no heart. Its branches will decay, so that neither oak-ball, nor acorn, nor green leaves will be seen upon them, and then perhaps, will the owner of the tree say, "That old, heartless oak no longer affords shade and shelter to the sheep and cattle, nor does it look pleasant to the eye; it must be felled." "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?"

And is there no danger of the same sentence being passed upon you, if you have no heart to love God? Did you never read the words, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die?" Ezek. xviii. 4. Surely you must have both heard and read them. Hasten, then, as a sinner, to the Saviour of sinners, that when the trees of the field shall be no more

seen, you may flourish as a cedar in the paradise of God.

The Saviour is willing to receive you. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," 1 John i. 8, 9.

You will, perhaps, never see the gnarled oak which I have described to you; but never mind that, for the first hollow tree that you meet with may remind you of it, and then you may call to remembrance what you have now read.

THE OLD PENSIONER.

I NEVER can make an impression on sailors' hearts so readily as I wish.

Walking near Greenwich one day, I met a red-faced old tar, who had taken more than was good for him, stumping along on a wooden leg. His locks were white, and he looked like one who had money in his pocket, and cared but little how freely he spent it. As I came up, he pulled out his tobacco box, and we thus talked together.

"May-be you'll take a bit of 'bacco with me my old boy! Plenty o' shot in the locker yet. Come, bear a hand!"

"No, thank you, I never chew tobacco."

"Never chew 'bacco! More's the pity; for, next to a glass o' grog, I take it to be one of the best things ashore."

"There are many better things than either grog or tobacco."

"May-be you're out o' your reckoning there; but let's know what sort of things they be."

"Health of body, peace of mind, a quiet conscience, the Bible, and the hope of heaven."

"Avast there! That's a lingo I never learnt. Our chaplain would a' sailed with you on that tack as long as you liked."

"You have lost your leg, I see."

"Ay, and many a better ship has started a timber; but what then! I has a pension, and a bit o' 'bacco and a glass o' grog are a comfort to me."

"You may, perhaps, want something to comfort you when grog and tobacco will be useless. Can you read the Bible?"

"It hurts my eye-sight, my hearty! I can't see well enough."

"Do you ever go any where to worship God?"

"Don't you see that I'm lame? I've enough stumping about as it is."

"But can you hear any body talk of heaven and

hell, without wishing to go to the one, and desiring to keep away from the other?"

"I don't feel afraid, my old boy! I don't feel afraid."

"If you can neither see, hear, nor feel, all that I can desire for you is, that in God's good time, you may be made able to do all three."

"Well, if you won't have no 'bacco, we must part company. You and the old chaplain would have cruised rarely together. Sea-room, and a stiff breeze, and Jack Billings will get into port yet."

Away went the sailor one way, while I proceeded the other, marvelling that "they that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters," and that see so much of "the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep," should be so little affected by the judgments and mercy of God.

PHILIP OF MACEDON.

"No warrior was ever bolder or more intrepid in the field than Philip of Macedon. Demosthenes, who cannot be suspected of having flattered him, gives the following testimony. 'I saw,' says this

orator, 'this very Philip, with whom we disputed for sovereignty and empire, I saw him, though covered with wounds, his eye struck out, his collar-bone broken, maimed in his hands and feet, still resolutely rush into the midst of dangers, and ready to deliver up to fortune any part of his body she might desire, provided he might live honourably and gloriously with the rest.'"

Christian, see what a heathen man will endure and achieve for mortal applause and earthly fame. The warriors of the world set an example of energy to the soldiers of Christ. They are ready to make every sacrifice, to endure every evil, to run every risk, jeopardizing body and soul for the glittering bubble of this world's approbation. There is some difference between time and eternity, earth and heaven, a chaplet of fading flowers and a crown of eternal glory; and yet they who follow after the lesser advantage, show more ardour, self-denial, and enterprise, than those who pursue the greater.

He who would endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, should be willing to learn from friends and enemies, wise men and fools, Christians and heathens, aught that will quicken his feet, strengthen his hands, or animate his heart in obeying the Captain of his salvation; and this being the case, we may learn a profitable lesson from what has been said of Philip of Macedon.

AN UNEXPECTED SERMON.

Sermons are not always preached from the pulpit; for the other day I unexpectedly heard a very good, though a homely one under the portico of a theatre in the Strand! It was an odd place, to be sure; but a smart shower had driven me there for shelter, and soon after an old man took shelter there also, who began to talk of the best things. "Sir," said he, "I am eighty-two years of age, and God has graciously given me, among many mercies, the mercy of being made sensible of his goodness. I remember in my boyhood hearing an aged minister declare from the pulpit, that when he was forty years old he considered himself so good, that he believed the temptations of Satan had no power over him; but when he was threescore and ten, he was obliged to confess *that Satan had a bait for old birds still.* I am, Sir, as I told you, eighty-two; and, as the minister found at threescore years and ten, so I find at eighty-two, that I am a poor, weak, worthless creature, totally dependent on God's goodness and grace, feeling every day of my life that *Satan has a bait for old birds still.*"

THE FIT OF ABSTRACTION.

It was on a sharp, frosty day at the latter end of December, when, standing up at the window to look at the trees powdered over as they were with snow, and at the poor half-famished birds that were rendered tame by the severity of the season, that I gave way to a fit of benevolent abstraction. I will endeavor to set down my ruminations.

"Oh!" thought I, "that it were possible for me to do some kindly deed to every man, woman, and child under the canopy of heaven! Oh, that I could for once in my life make every eye sparkle, every pulse throb, and every heart beat with delight! Had I the power, the poor should be made rich, the rich more affluent than they are, and the one and the other should have heavenly hopes added to their earthly enjoyments!"

Now this was all very beautiful, and I no doubt thought so, for I continued my musings of benevolence.

"How delightful it would be to comfort the afflicted, to raise the fallen, to liberate the captive, to heal the sick, to bind up the bruised and the broken, and to scatter abroad, wide as the world, the elements of peace, comfort, satisfaction, happiness, and delight."

If any thing, this latter burst of philanthropy was finer than the former; and most likely, at the moment, my countenance brightened up in contemplating the fair picture which my fancy in such glowing colours had drawn. But not yet was the fountain of my good intentions dry, or the treasure-house of my munificence exhausted; for thus did I continue my abstraction.

"Had I the power and the opportunity to bless mankind, friend and foe should alike be the partakers of my bounty; misery should be unknown; unkindness should be banished from the world, and the nations of the earth should celebrate an unbroken jubilee of joy."

By the time that I had arrived at this exalted climax of philanthropy, I stood tolerably high in my own estimation, and how much higher I might have elevated myself it would be hard to say; but, at the moment, my opposite neighbour opened his door to let in a strange cat, which had, for some time, been mewing in the cold; he brought out, too, directly after, some broken victuals to a shivering lad, who had undertaken for a trifle to sweep away the snow from his door, and scattered a liberal handful of crumbs around for the benefit of the poor birds.

With shame and confusion I reflected on my useless *thoughts*, and on my neighbour's *deeds*. I had stood stock still, idly dreaming on *imaginary* kindness, while he had really performed three acts of unobtrusive charity. When shall we learn that

benevolence consists not in *thinking*, but in *doing?* A real penny outweighs an ideal pound, and a cup of cold water given with kindness is better than rivers of oil flowing only in the imagination.

THE COAT OF MANY COLOURS.

THE other Sabbath morning I overtook an aged man whose threadbare coat was well patched with cloth of different hues, so that it was indeed "a coat of many colours." As I walked behind him, musing on his grey hair, his bent body, his humble mien, and slow movement, he turned into a place of worship. "Well," thought I, "I took him for a pilgrim, and a pilgrim he is, I doubt not, to the city with the golden gates. He appears to be low in the world; but there was one who wore, if not a coat of the same kind as his, at least a coat of many colours, who was brought much lower, and yet afterwards was raised to a high estate, even to sit among princes."

However much there may be to discourage a man in so humble a garb from thriving in this world, there seems to be no impediment in the way of his arriving at high honour and dignity in the

world that is to come. Earthly kings may not covet his company; but if his heart be right with God, however lowly his apparel may be, he shall share the glory of the King of heaven. It must comfort such an one to know on Divine authority, that the Almighty Ruler of the skies despiseth not poverty. He puts down the mighty from their seat, and exalts them of low degree. He fills the hungry with good things, and sends the rich empty away.

Were all the Christians congregated together to whom the Saviour of the world when on earth showed personal kindness, they would form but a motley group, and would obtain but little attention, on account of the respectability of their clothing. Simon Peter's "fisher's coat" was most likely of a homely fashion. Poor blind Bartimeus, who would not be chidden into silence, but persisted in crying out, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me," was not, you may depend upon it, dressed in very fashionable attire. I greatly question if the cloak that Paul left at Troas was of much value; and I never could think of lowly Lazarus as wearing any other coat on the Sabbath day than that which he wore on every other day of the week.

Cheer up, humble-minded, meanly-clad Christian. Be content for awhile to take the lowest seat: by and by thou shalt hear the welcome invitation of thy Lord, "Come up higher," when garments shall be given thee pure and white as the moon in her brightness, and effulgent as the sun in his glory.

SUDDEN CHANGES.

An old man's experience will perhaps be borne out by your own in the following relation.

How sudden are, at times, the changes in the face of creation! One of the goodliest days that I ever remember was ushered in by the appearance of a storm. A sullen stillness prevailed, and the gathering gloom became more and more oppressive. It was a season that solemnized the mind. A day in which the burdened spirit might have given way to sadness, and the desponding soul lamented for sin The heavy clouds were rolled thickly together; the low growl of the distant thunder seemed the note of preparation—the precursor of the raging storm. But even from the very bosom of the coal-black cloud the sunbeam bursts forth; the darkened vapours were soon after scattered, and heaven was lit up with a blaze of glory. It was a season of sudden surprise and joy. A day in which the exulting heart might have cried aloud, "Let young men, and maidens; old men, and children; yea, let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven. Praise ye the Lord," Psa. cxlviii. 12, 13; cl. 6.

How oft amid the murky shroud
The sunbeam wins its way,
And breaking from the thunder cloud,
Proclaims a goodly day.

How often too, with waving wings,
When judgments seem to roll,
Mercy flies kindly forth, and flings
A sunbeam on the soul.

THE CHURLISH FARMER.

ARE you kind-hearted or churlish? This is a little like asking if you are a cordial or a scourge to those around you.

One of the most churlish remarks that I remember to have ever heard was made by a farmer; it was on a Shrove Tuesday. A servant-girl had been frying pancakes and fritters all the morning, till, what with the heat and the fatigue, she seemed hardly able to stand. A kind-hearted visitor, who happened to be present, interceded that the girl might have a little rest. "*Let her rest in her grave!*" was the reply of the churlish farmer.

This happened when I was a boy, so that by the time I grew up to manhood, the churlish farmer was in years. With the wrinkled brow and the

grey hair came age's infirmities, weakness, rheumatic attacks, loss of appetite and decrepitude. Often and often did I hear him complain of weariness and pain, and especially that he could get no rest; but never do I remember hearing him make this last observation without being reminded of his churlish remark, "*Let her rest in her grave!*"

Years rolled on; spring and summer, autumn and winter passed away. The farmer's ground was ploughed and sowed, reaped and mowed; his harvests were safely stowed in his rickyards and barns, and at last he himself was gathered into the garner of death.

It seems but as yesterday when I attended his remains to the house appointed for all living. When the funeral service had been read, the rattling earth dropped on the coffin, and the minister had taken his departure, some who were present indulged in a few remarks standing on the edge of the grave. One remembered *this* of the departed, and another remembered *that*. I had my remembrance too; and I wish it had been of a different kind. I remembered—and it moves me even now to acknowledge it—I remembered his churlish remark, "*Let her rest in her grave!*"

Now, whatever of our frailties and infirmities may be remembered by our surviving friends, when the green sod is growing over us, let it not be said that we had within us unkind and churlish hearts. We are borne with; let us bear with others, not

forgetting the injunction of the apostle Peter, "Be pitiful, be courteous;" nor that of St. Paul, "Be kindly affectioned one to another," Rom. xii. 10; 1 Pet. iii. 8.

DESOLATION.

Another thought for the thoughtful.

Most persons, young and old, have a pleasure in visiting ruins: this inclination is somewhat romantic in youth, but in age it springs from graver and deeper emotions. When an old man gazes on a dilapidated mansion, a roofless church, a ruined abbey, a desolated palace, or a mouldering castle, it comes home to his heart. The ivy, the crumbling wall, the falling fragment, and the tottering tower speak to his spirit in a language that he cannot but comprehend. They are monuments on which are graven his own mortality.

Old Humphrey has wandered in desolate places, while the hollow blustering wind and the voiceless solitude have alike impressed his mind with the solemn truth, that the ground was giving way beneath his feet, and all things fading around him. His latter end has been vividly brought before him

and his lips in a subdued tone have syllabled the words, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come," Job xiv. 14.

How impressive is the language of Holy Writ when prophetically sketching the ruins of Babylon!

"It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation, neither shall the Arabian pitch his tent there: neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there," Isa. xiii. 20, 21.

"I will also make it a possession for the bittern, and pools of water: and I will sweep it with the besom of destruction, saith the Lord of hosts," Isa. xiv. 23.

Not only Christians, but Turks have been moved to solemn reflections by the influence of desolate places over their minds. It is said that when Mohammed, second emperor of the Turks, took possession of Constantinople in the year 1453, and thus put an end to the Roman name, that the splendid palaces of Constantine in their desolation much affected him. For a season he mused in a melancholy manner on the fading nature of earthly greatness, and then broke out in the language of Arabian poetry, "The spider hath woven her web in the imperial palace, and the owl hath sung her watch song on the towers of Afrasiab."

THE DOORS BEING SHUT.

I HAVE been reading over the text, "Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you," John xx. 19. I have been reflecting on the circumstance of "the doors being shut," and some pleasant though somewhat fanciful thoughts have come across my mind.

Do you wish that Jesus would come into your heart, saying, "Peace be unto you?" Look well to it, that the "doors" and windows are "shut;" for if your ears are open to take in all the vain babbling that prevails in Vanity Fair, and your eyes open to stare at all the fine things there set forth, your heart will soon be as full as the inn at Bethlehem, and there will be no room for Jesus. Either keep the doors and windows shut, or watch them carefully. It is cold work watching, especially when darkness is round you. Many a weary hour will you have while other folks are merry-making; but when He comes, you shall see that the morning Sun of Righteousness is better than the midnight lamp of revelry.

TRYING TIMES.

You may have seen, perhaps, the parting of a band of emigrants with their friends just as the ship was about to weigh anchor. Mothers hanging on the necks of their sons; brothers and sisters linked in each other's arms; lovers as pale as agony could make them, clinging to one another, bathed in tears; and white-headed old men and grey-headed old women, spreading out their aged hands to their children on board, or clasping them in prayer on their bended knees, invoking the best blessings of the Almighty on those they were about to lose for ever! If you have seen these things—the tears, the lamentations, the blessings, the agony, the faintings, and the prayers, no doubt, sunk into your souls.

It is just possible too, that you may have been present among the passengers of a ship in distress, when the mast has been carried away by the board, when a leak has sprung, and four feet of water been collected in the hold. When the vessel has stuck on a rock, staving in her bows, tearing away her keel, and beating about on the sharp crags like a huge fish left by the receding sea upon the shallowy shore; and if so, you must have seen the wild rush of crew and passengers on deck; witnessed the heart-rending agony of old and young, and heard

the mingled oaths and prayers, the fervent petitions and frantic ravings of the bewildered throng in momentary expectation of overwhelming destruction.

Now these are trying times, and they bring to light whether we have been building on the sands or on the rock. It is in vain to deceive ourselves with false hopes, trusting to the strength of our minds and the influence of reason over us, for these things will no more support us in such seasons than a leaky boat will preserve us in a storm. There is no cure for the sorrows of earth, save the well-grounded hope of the joys of heaven. If, when we part with our friends here, we have the assurance that we shall meet them hereafter, it will go far to mitigate our grief, and if, when we are tost in the storm that threatens us and all around us with destruction, we can put our confidence in him who said to the troubled ocean, "Peace, be still," Mark iv. 39, then only will our souls be sustained in peace.

THE TWO BUSTS.

Never affect knowledge in that about which you know nothing. By acting contrary to this advice,

you may pass for a person of discernment one moment, and be overwhelmed with confusion the next.

I will not undertake to answer for the truth of the tale, but it is said that a stranger once went into the study of a statuary, where two busts were standing; one, he was told, was the resemblance of the murderous Greenacre, and the other that of the benevolent Howard.

For some time he gazed on the figures, observing in one all the ruffian qualities of a murderer, and as distinctly tracing in the other all the amiable virtues of a philanthropist. Long and loud were his praises in commendation of the sculptor who had succeeded in depicting so faithfully and forcibly the lineaments of virtue and vice. All passed off remarkably well, until the discriminating stranger, by one of his remarks, made it appear too plainly that he had mistaken one bust for the other: that in which he had admired virtue was the likeness of Greenacre; and the other in which he had abhorred vice, was the resemblance of the philanthropist.

If we are in the mood to profit, we may get good from the narration given. Who is there that has not credit for more wisdom than he possesses? With many it is a favourite object to appear wiser than others; and with most of us it is easy to be proud, but very hard to be humble.

A HINT TO A NEIGHBOUR ON INDIGESTION.

As you are troubled with indigestion, taking medicine, and leading a weary life of it, now better for a season, and then again worse than ever, I will prescribe for you. Experience is an excellent physician; take then my recipe. You are welcome to it, though it is invaluable.

Look less to the food you eat, and more to the temper and frame of mind in which you eat it.

Instead of getting much physic into your stomach, get a little thankfulness into your heart, and you will soon see what will become of your indigestion. The love of God shed abroad in the heart helps the temper; a good temper helps the appetite; a good appetite helps the stomach; and a good stomach assists the digestion.

So long as you are under the dominion of fear, anger, hurry, care, grief, ill-temper, or any bad passion, you may live in vain on the wings of larks, the thighs of woodcocks, and the breasts of partridges. Nothing will suit your digestion; the tender will become tough, and the light will lie heavy on your stomach.

Let love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness,

goodness, abide and abound in your heart. Obtain this spirit, eat your food under its influence, and get often into the fresh air; and, take my word for it, you will ere long be able to eat toasted cheese and barm dumplings with impunity.

THE BASKET OF SUMMER FRUIT.

WHERE is the Bible reader in the whole world who has not occasionally found, when reading the word of God, an unusual fulness, significancy, and sweetness in texts which he has read over a hundred times without emotion! Sometimes too, the words suggest to the mind comfortable thoughts which appear to have little or no connexion with the true meaning of the text. A case of this kind occurred to me yesterday, as I read the words, "And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer fruit," Amos viii. 2.

Now the basket of summer fruit seems in the prophecy to set forth the approaching end of Israel; but it communicated to my mind joyous feelings, and delightful anticipations. "Summer fruit," seemed the symbol of coming mercies and blessings about to be enjoyed. What more pleasant to the

eye, what more grateful to the taste, in the sunny season of the year, than summer fruit? "Amos, what seest thou? A basket of summer fruit."

A good thing it is to know the true meaning of every text in God's holy word; but I hope it is not an unlawful use of Scripture to receive gratefully any pleasant suggestion it may convey that is not opposed to its general spirit and truth; and that I may, without committing an error, follow out such suggestion when it adds as much to my thankfulness as to my joy.

Oh what goodly baskets of summer fruit are in store for the humble believer! First, there is summer itself, with all its fruits and flowers, its glowing scenes and golden, glorious skies, all given by the hand of his heavenly Father! Then there are heart-comforting seasons of prayer and praise, wherein a weak worm of the earth is permitted to hold close communion with the mighty God of heaven! Then there is the book of eternal truth, not the word of men, but as it is in truth the word of God, enlightening the eyes, making wise the simple, converting the soul, and rejoicing the heart, Psa. xix. 7, 8. Then come the ordinances of religion, the means of grace, and the hope of glory through Jesus Christ, with all the precious promises of support through life and death, and an abundant entrance into life eternal. "Amos, what seest thou? A basket of summer fruit." Ay, and a precious basket it is too; for though in one sense it shadows

forth the end of Israel on earth, in another it sets forth, as with a sunbeam, the beginning of Israel in heaven. If you are enabled to consider this subject experimentally, it will be indeed a basket of summer fruit, refreshing to your heart and to your soul.

THE LASKET LANE.

AGAIN do I say it to my sorrow, that a worse road than Lasket Lane it would be very difficult to find. So stony in one part, and so clayey in another; so full of deep ruts, holes, and quagmires, and so beset on each side with straggling brambles, that, take it altogether, it would be, as I said, no easy matter to find a worse road.

Not only is the road bad in itself, but the people who have to do with it seem to take a sort of pride in making it worse. On one side the road lies a gate-post, thrown down so carelessly, that any one unaccustomed to the lane, when driving along in a gig at nightfall, would, in all probability, be overthrown. On the other side, at some distance from the gate-post, is a heap of weeds, not spread about, but piled up as if for the very purpose of doing mischief; while from the top of the lane to the bottom,

large heaps of stones lie in very dangerous positions: they may be broken some day to fill up the ruts, the holes, and the quagmires; but while they lie where they now are, they render Lasket Lane almost impassable.

Some time ago, I had to pass along this lane on a very stormy day; and though I was on horseback, with a pair of mud boots up to my thighs, and a great coat and Macintosh on my back, still to get along Lasket Lane was a sad trouble to me. While I was walking my horse cautiously along, holding at the same time an umbrella over my head, I heard a splashing behind me, and in another minute, a countryman, in a smock-frock, mounted on a strong horse, dashed by me, seemingly as light-hearted and as unconcerned as if the weather had been fine, and the Lasket Lane as smooth as a bowling-green.

The countryman had neither umbrella, mud boots, great coat, nor Macintosh cloak; yet on he went freely and fearlessly, not even thinking that to be a trouble, which I had so much difficulty in contending with. As he resolutely splashed onward through the miry lane, I looked after him with a degree of respect; for I felt my own littleness. "There goes my superior!" thought I, and before I had reached the middle of the Lasket Lane, no doubt he was at the end of it.

If you had seen me huddled up on horseback, wrinkling my brow at the stormy weather, and looking anxiously at the wretched road, you would

very likely have laughed at me; but had you seen the countryman, you would have regarded him with pleasure. Learn a lesson, then, from us both.

There are many Lasket Lanes in the world, of one kind or other: rude and rough roads, and deep and dirty quagmires are to be found in most places; and if there are not these, still there are trials to endure, and difficulties to overcome. Meet them with a good spirit, and be not disheartened by trifling troubles!

Be ashamed of giving way to unnecessary fears; look upward confidently, and go onwards boldly. Learn to endure hardness as a faithful soldier of Christ, especially in holy things; for "no man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God," Luke ix. 62.

Courage in the common affairs of life is a valuable quality, but in spiritual things it is a Christian grace. Let us take courage, then, thinking lightly of our momentary troubles. "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds," Heb. xii. 1—3.

GOD'S PRESENCE.

THEY who have God's presence have all that they need; for in his presence is fulness of joy, and at his right hand pleasures for evermore. Are they in doubt and danger? they hear the Master's voice saying, "Peace, be still," and, "It is I; be not afraid!" Are they in the water or the fire? "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee;—when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned." Christians, indeed, are not over particular about circumstances, so that they are blessed with God's presence. When Jesus is seen walking upon the sea, they know that there will soon be a great calm. The people of God know what winter is, as well as summer; they know what thorns are as well as flowers. Often do they walk in desolate places, and stumble in rugged pathways with a darkness that may be felt all around them; but when God is with them, crooked things are made straight, and rough places plain. I ask not, therefore, whether you are at ease or in trouble; whether you are sitting down in green pastures, or standing up in a fiery furnace; but, rather, *Is there one with you like unto "the Son of God?"* See Dan. iii. 25.

ON DRESS.

What a medley of opinions, what diversified inclinations there are among mankind on the subject of dress! One follows the fashion; another is negligent, and becomes slovenly; a third considers neatness an indispensable requisite; a fourth disapproves of wearing mourning; and a fifth dresses plain and lowly, making it a matter of conscience to do so, and deeming it wrong to do otherwise. For myself, I leave the right and the wrong of the thing, believing as I do that we are too apt, in many cases, to be more precise than our heavenly Father requires us to be. We are too much given to bind ourselves where He gives us liberty, and to take liberty where He would bind us for our good; but I am rather fond of following out my own feelings in these matters, and in letting others follow out theirs. Let the rejoicing bride and bridegroom adorn themselves with their wedding garments; and let those who are sorrowful, if they list, put on sackcloth and go softly. Some time ago, in leaving the house of a neighbour, I took up a hat which had crape around it; but as it did not fit me, I returned to change it for my own. "Well, sir," said the owner of the hat, "I do not much wonder at the mistake, as we have each of us hoisted the symbol

of sorrow. May that sorrow which is shadowed forth in our hats be sanctified to our hearts, and then it will be a blessing to us both." This Christian remark had my hearty Amen! and the crape on my hat has often, since then, brought it into my mind.

Whatever be our opinions about dress, it is not, I think, wise to affect singularity. Were a man to dress himself up in a Merry Andrew's cap and bells, or a harlequin's jacket, he might set the neigbourhood grinning around him, but he would add thereby neither to his comfort nor his reputation. But, after all, weakness is more pardonable than ill-nature; and, therefore, though I hold with no extremes, I dislike the extreme of fashion less than the extreme of fault-finding.

THE BITTER FRUITS OF WAR.

The surgeon who would cure a wound must probe it to the bottom, if it be requisite; and he that would produce a hatred of war, must not be afraid to make manifest its enormities.

"The field of battle (Borodino) had all the appearance of an extinguished volcano. The ground

was covered all around with fragments of helmets and cuirasses, broken drums, gun-stocks, tatters of uniforms, and standards dyed with blood. On this spot lay thirty thousand half-devoured corses. The emperor (Napoleon) passed quickly, nobody stopped; cold, hunger, and the enemy urged us on: we merely turned our faces as we proceeded, to take a last melancholy look at the vast grave of so many companions in arms uselessly sacrificed."—SEGUR'S *Russian Campaign.*

Read, ye fathers! Are ye ready thus to sacrifice your sons? Is this the fame and the glory ye desire for them? Are ye quite content that the flesh of your flesh, and bone of your bone should thus be made an untimely banquet for birds and beasts of prey?

"Multitudes of these desolate fugitives lost their speech; others were seized with frenzy, and many were so maddened with the extremes of pain and hunger, that they tore the dead bodies of their comrades to pieces, and feasted on the disgusting remains."—SIR ROBERT KER PORTER.

Read, ye mothers! and ask yourselves if it was for this that ye nourished and brought up your children tenderly—for this that ye watched and wept over them, and taught them to lisp their infant prayers?

"In the hospitals of Wilna, were above nineteen thousand dead and dying, frozen and freezing; the bodies of the former broken up, served to stop the

cavities in windows, floors, and walls; but in one of the corridors of the great convent, above fifteen hundred bodies were piled up transversely, as pigs of lead or iron. In the roads, men were collected around the burning ruins of the cottages which a mad spirit of destruction had fired, picking and eating the burnt bodies of their fellow-men."—Sir Robert Wilson.

Read, ye fathers and mothers! ye wives and husbands. Read in the bitterness of your spirit, and instead of railing on the culpable demerits of others that delight in war, call to mind your own. I would fain put these questions to your hearts and your souls. Have you ever reflected on the sin and the sorrows of war? Have you ever lifted up your voice on high among your friends, or whispered into the ears of your children, denouncing war as a curse to mankind? Have you ever put up a prayer to the High and Holy One, that the sword might be scabbarded for ever? Have you, in short, done any thing in thought, word, or deed, to extend on earth the blessings of peace, and to diminish the guilt and misery of war?

THE SETTING SUN.

Did our emotions at al correspond with the wonders around us, then would our hands, our eyes, and our hearts be continually lifted up towards heaven. What a goodly sight is that of the retiring orb of day! The sunset that I have just seen is not to be described; but as fair and glowing landscapes are sometimes tolerably depicted in Indian ink, so my poor expressions may shadow forth some faint resemblance of the glorious spectacle on which I have so recently gazed.

Blue was the wide firmament in the east, the north, and the south: it was in the west alone that the kindling beams of the retiring sun were visible, gradually increasing in intensity till the overpowered sight could no longer endure the brightness that in one point concentrated itself in an apparent blaze. A change came over the scene, and dark, gilt-edged clouds in broken masses assumed the appearance of rocks, through which floods of light found their way. Another change. The rocks became darker, and the glowing light brighter. It was a transition from loveliness to excessive beauty, from grandeur to magnificence unutterable. I could only give a rapid glance at the overpowering scene; but in that glance what glory was visible! The

floods of light were as cascades of silvery streams, cataracts of molten gold, and tumbling torrents of liquid diamonds.

In this imperfect state of being, how much of rapture may be enjoyed! but in a more glorious existence a thousand new senses may be given us, and ten thousand new sources of delight.

A SABBATH PASSED IN A DITCH.

In moving among mankind, we are very sure, every now and then, unexpectedly to fall in with those who are grateful for the means of grace, and the hope of glory, who read the Bible, value the sabbath, and love the Saviour.

Not long ago, I met with a stranger, who, in conversation with me, spoke thus on the subject of the Christian sabbath:—"Though there is doubtless much of ungodliness in England, yet when compared with the sabbaths on the continent, a sabbath here is a delightful season. No one can truly value that blessed day until he has been deprived of its enjoyment. When in the army, I felt this deprivation: we had misery in every shape; for, in the Peninsular war, toil, danger, disease, and death, were con

tinually around us and among us. The nearer the troops appeared to be to eternity, the farther off their thoughts appeared to be from God. The thousands that had been slain were disregarded; neither the dead nor the dying seemed to excite a serious thought in the minds of the reckless soldiers. In such circumstances, how grateful would have been the peace, the refreshment, the consolation, the joy of a Christian sabbath.

"It was on the sabbath-day that I received a letter from an affectionate daughter, then in England: it alluded to the uncertainty of life, especially to a military man. It pressed on me the consideration of eternal things, and pointed me to Him who, in peace and in war, in health and in sickness, in life and in death, is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him. Every word made a lodgment in my heart. Folding up the letter, and putting a prayer-book in my pocket, I walked out to a distance from the camp, until I came to a solitary ditch, *in that ditch, on my knees, I poured out my soul before God, and there, in peace, I spent my sabbath day!*"

Christian reader, this anecdote is worthy of attention; it shows that, with God's blessing, the faithful and affectionate remonstrance of a pious child will affect the heart of a parent, though he be a soldier in the camp, and surrounded with ungodliness; and also that when the soul truly hungers and thirsts after the bread of life and living waters, it

will, under the most unfavourable circumstances, find out a way of holding communion with God. The heart may be comforted in the most solitary place, and a profitable sabbath may be spent in a ditch.

WAGES.

One word with you about wages; but first let me tell you, that I am not one of those who would have men work for nothing. No, no! An honest, industrious, skilful workman ought to receive good wages. Neither am I one of those who think workmen ought to demand what they like for their labour, regardless whether or not their masters can afford to give them more than they do. Masters must be considered as well as men. In short, I take it that a discontented and encroaching workman, and a hard, oppressive master, are both alike, and that neither the one nor the other is a creditable character. Masters cannot do without workmen, nor workmen without masters; so the one ought to consider the welfare of the other.

You may say that workmen's wages are not high enough, either in town or country, and that a man

with a family has many a pinch to make both ends meet; but, bad as it is to have low wages, it would be a great deal worse not to receive wages after they had been fairly earned. How would you feel if, on a Saturday night, your master should say that he did not intend to pay you your wages? You would tell him that you had worked hard and honestly for your money, and were therefore entitled to it; and in telling him so, you would speak the truth. But, let us see if you would, on all occasions, be equally anxious to receive your wages.

You either are, or ought to be, a servant of God, "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity." What wages, then, do you consider yourself entitled to receive at his hands? If as an humble follower of Christ, relying wholly on his atoning sacrifice, and giving all glory to God, you work while it is called to-day, doing the service of your Master with a willing mind, you will have no reason to complain of him hereafter. Grace here, and glory hereafter, are not to be despised. But, remember, "The wages of sin is death," sure, certain, and eternal death. Remember, that even the great apostle Paul complained of the evil of his heart, and that the word of God tells us there is none righteous, no, not one! If, then, "the labourer is worthy of his hire," will you venture to *demand* your wages! If God, the Almighty Master of his servants, is ready to render to "every man according to his work," are you equally ready to receive your

wages? This is a serious inquiry, and may, perhaps, lead you, not only to reflect on God's forbearance during your past life, but also to seek his grace in time to come, that you may be "a workman that needeth not to be ashamed."

"Time moves with rapid wings; but when shall fly
The countless ages of eternity?"

Of how little importance are the wages of time, compared with those of eternity? If you know that you have done the works of iniquity, and feel afraid to reply to the inquiry, "Tell me, what shall thy wages be?" take up the language of the poor prodigal, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants," Luke xv. 18, 19. If thus, with a contrite spirit, you are enabled through mercy to enter anew into the service of God, you will receive from him more than you can ask or think.

"For kingly crowns, though freely given,
Are dross, compared with that reward
Of peace on earth and joy in heaven,
Prepared for those who love the Lord."

SUITABLE MERCIES.

When we regard the human frame attentively, we are not only struck with its symmetry and beauty, but also with the suitableness of its separate parts to the functions they have to perform. Had the hands occupied the place of the feet, and the feet the place of the hands, how imperfect would have been the workmanship performed by the one, and the movements made by the other! It is the same with the other members; they are nicely adapted to their several ends.

Although we observe these things, we are not so quick to perceive a suitableness in the blessings which our heavenly Father bestows upon us in the different seasons of life. If in youth we had the love of quietude that accompanies age, our strength and activity would be of little use; and if in age we possessed the ardour of youth, our infirmities would prevent it from being a benefit to us. There are a few lines, written by the Rev. H. Venn, on this subject, that can scarcely be read without interest.

"When I look back forty years of my life, I remember I was perpetually in company, full of animal spirits, thoughtless, self-pleasing, and solitude would, then, have been the heaviest burden to my mind. Now, to be alone; to be looking on my bed

as probably the spot on which I am to fight the last battle before I win Christ, and see him as he is; to consider, with the closest attention, the origin, and the nature, and the consequences of death, to the friends of Christ:—this work invigorates my mind, and nourishes my soul. I accept the privilege and power of doing thus, and the great opportunity I have for this exercise, with joyful gratitude, saying, 'The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places: yea, I have a goodly heritage,'" Psa. xvi. 6.

THE SEASONS.

You will agree with Old Humphrey that Spring is a pleasant time; and when the sun is shining, the flowers blooming, the green trees waving, the birds singing, the balmy breeze blowing, the spirit rejoices, and the lips burst into a song.

Summer is a pleasant time, when the noon-tide ray gilds up the woods, the waters, and the mountain-tops; when the air is filled with odours, and the laugh of the merry haymakers is heard in the meads.

Autumn is a pleasant time, and we cannot look without gladness on the golden grain, the laden

fruit trees, the varied foliage, and the kindling heavens.

Winter is a pleasant time to all who are hardy enough to walk abroad when the frosted snow lies on the ground, and the trees are hung fantastically with rime; for then wonder is awakened in the mind, and the pure, sharp, bracing air gives a cheerfulness to the spirit.

Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter, are pleasant seasons, and if any thing can make them more pleasant, it is the heart-felt remembrance that they are the gift of God. Yes, He who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance; He, with whom the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance, who "taketh up the isles as a very little thing;" for whom "Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering;" He has given them to me. And what have I given in return? the fragments of my feelings, and the mere shreds of the joyous days and peaceful nights he has bestowed upon me.

Oh let me then with all my powers,
Prolong his sacred praise
Through Spring and Summer's rosy hours,
And Autumn's pleasant days!

And when the keener wintry skies
Shall freeze the sterile ground,
Then let my halleluiahs rise,
And more and more abound.

WE SHALL MEET IN HEAVEN.

I HAVE just received a letter from a Christian friend, a dear, afflicted, aged, and dying friend; but his heart is where it should be. It has got above the mists and fogs that gather about us here, and seems to set but little store by any thing that has not immortality written upon it. One paragraph of the letter says, "We shall meet in heaven;" and if this expression has brought tears into my eyes, it has also given joy to my heart and soul. "We shall meet in heaven." Why, then, what need have we to be cast down by any thing that shall happen on earth?

The thorny and boggy places, the rough and crooked pathways that we sometimes get into, are enough to make our faces a little cloudy, and our souls a little sorrowful, so long as we can see no end to them; but what bewildered and benighted wanderer ever despairs while he sees before him a

friendly light? What weary and way-worn traveller gives way to despondency while he discerns in the distance the door of his own cottage open to receive him?

The assurance that "we shall meet in heaven" is a cure for all earthly ills.

But, then, is the saying a true one? Can we depend upon it? Are we sure that we *shall* meet in heaven? What the heart says, either when it is in trouble or in joy, is very uncertain; and what the world says is still less to be depended on; therefore, we must go to the words of unchangeable truth for a reason of the hope that is within us. Will the word of God warrant the expression spoken by one follower of the Redeemer to another, "We shall meet in heaven?" If it will not, we have darkness and despondency; if it will, we have light and exultation.

Let, then, every saint—and what is a saint but a pardoned and saved sinner?—let the lowliest disciple of Jesus Christ take courage, and gird up his loins, and not faint by the way; for these words were spoken by the lips of the Redeemer, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also," John xiv. 2, 3.

Yes! yes! my friend, you are right! "we shall meet in heaven," nor can the dim eye, the faltering frame, and desponding, unbelieving heart prevent

it; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it. You may get the start of me. You may be in heaven before me. You may say to me, in the language of the Bible you love, "Stand here, while I meet the Lord yonder;" but, for all that, "we shall meet in heaven."

FOR ME.

Regarding myself as a part of that boundless whole, that immeasurable creation which the hand of the Almighty has formed, and receiving as I do daily comfort and enjoyment from the things around me, I love to think that my happiness has been one of the ends for which they were created. The very thought is enough to call forth thankfulness in my heart and soul, and to fill my mouth with praises.

I know that the creation has been formed for the enjoyment of myriads of beings, yet still it was not the less formed for me. The beauteous clouds that hang like a canopy around the world; Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter that diversify the earth, are charged to minister to my welfare and happiness.

The sunlit clouds above me fair and free,
And changing seasons, onward roll for me.

When I hear the winds gently breathing at ruddy morn or dewy eve, or when they rush forth resistless in their course—when I regard the ebbing or flowing tide of the world of waters, or gaze with wonder on its mountainous billows chafed into fury by the storm, the same thought pervades my mind—it is for me these changes are made.

For me the winds on urgent errands ride,
And boundless ocean rolls its mighty tide.

The moon, that glides so peacefully through the blue vault above me, is distant two hundred and forty thousand miles. The sun that gilds creation with its beams is ninety-five millions of miles removed from this habitable globe; and the glittering stars that stud the skies are said to be at least nineteen millions of millions of miles separated from us; and yet as an intelligent being and an heir of immortality, profiting by their existence and admiring their beauty, I may say, in grateful acknowledgement to their almighty Maker,

Ye glowing balls! ye shining orbs of heaven!
Sun, moon, and stars, for me your light is given.

HOW OLD ARE YOU?

"*How old are you?*" said a woman to an aged man, who was leaning upon two sticks. I lingered to hear the old man's reply. "*I shall be fourscore,*" said he, "*if I live till next Easter.*"

Many a word dropped by the way-side has been picked up and pondered on with advantage in an after hour; let me, then, ask you, "*How old are you?*"

Are you ten? because if you are, you have ten thousand sins to repent of, and ten thousand mercies to be grateful for. What a thought! Did you ever think of it before? If not, it is worth your while to think of it now, and very seriously too, bearing in mind that youth is the time to serve the Lord; that a good beginning bids fair to be followed by a good ending; that "dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," Gen. iii. 19; and that "we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ," Rom. xiv. 10.

Are you twenty or thirty? If so, you have still more sins to forsake, and more mercies thankfully to acknowledge. You are in the meridian of your day, the prime of your life. If you have allowed your youth to pass unimproved, run no further risk,

try to make amends for the past. Up and be doing; call upon the name of the Lord. Though you forget a thousand things, never forget "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment," Heb. ix. 27.

Are you forty or fifty? If this be the case, there is no time to lose. You must look about you, lest the shadows of night overtake you. What have you done for the glory of God? What are you doing? What do you intend to do? More than half your life is gone by, even though your days should be long in the land. If you have not yet made up your mind to forsake sin, and to cling to the cross of the Redeemer, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the following passage in the word of God: "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord," Rom. vi. 23.

Are you sixty or seventy? Do you answer, Yes. Then I hope that while your feet are on the earth, your eyes and your heart are fixed upon heaven. Is it necessary to remind you, that your days are drawing to a close, that your life is as a spider's web? "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away," Psa. xc. 10. Death is at the very door. Flee from the wrath to come, and ponder on the passage,

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord," Rev. xiv. 13.

If to the question, "*How old are you?*" you can give the same reply as the old man did, "*I shall be fourscore, if I live till next Easter,*" you are absolutely beside yourself if you are not daily looking forward to eternity. If the warning voice whispers to youth, and speaks audibly to manhood, it cries aloud to you. Not only with your mouth, but with your heart you should say, "There is but a step between me and death," 1 Sam. xx. 3. If you have not, long ago, fled for refuge to the cross, and obtained mercy from the Saviour of sinners, go now, even at the eleventh hour: think of the innumerable, the heaped up transgressions of your youth, your manhood, and old age. Lose not a day, an hour, a moment, in applying to Him who "is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them," Heb. vii. 25. Since you first drew breath, more than four thousand sabbaths have passed away. The sun has risen and set between twenty and thirty thousand times, and thousands of millions of human beings have passed from time into eternity. Still there is mercy.

But, if your treasure and your heart be in heaven, why then, be of good courage; though flesh and heart fail you, God will be the strength of your heart, and your portion for ever. Go on, traveller; for you may even now see the end of your journey

You have born the heat and burden of the day; you have passed through briers and thorns; you have but a little further to travel; endure to the end, and you shall be saved. The older you are, the nearer to heaven! the heavier your load, the greater your deliverance! The darker your pathway below, the brighter your glory above. Sin, and tears, and sorrow shall pass away; and "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory," Col. iii. 4.

TOWN AND COUNTRY.

"I WISH," says a town friend, "you had accompanied me to Exeter Hall; there is something so animating in the addresses of Christian men, when their eloquence is that of the heart, called forth by a grateful sense of the abundant mercies of their heavenly Father.

"I wish," says a friend in the country, "you could see the primroses, the cowslips and the blue bells around me, with the golden green of the beeches bursting forth in the woods, and then you would not be surpised to find that halleluiahs are irrepressible. The Psalmist found them so; and I,

too, feel inclined to call on all the trees around me to clap their hands with louder chorus than ever burst from Exeter Hall. You should have been with me this morning, to have seen the gleams of living light, glancing on the beech woods while the freshening gale made the towering trees bow their radiant heads, as if in adoration of their great Creator; and then I feel certain, that many lively poetic feelings and many glowing devout affections would have been kindled in your heart."

Thus beset on all sides with Christian provocation, marvel not that, growing a little warm, not with anger but with thankfulness, I should *cry out* aloud, "Praise God in his sanctuary! Praise him in the firmament of his power! Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord!" Psa. cl. 1, 6.

WHO'S THE NEXT?

Here comes the cheerful old man with his vegetables. So sure as the morning comes, so sure does he come too, with his horse and cart. He is usually dressed in an old great coat and blue apron; and his cart plentifully supplied with potatoes, greens, celery, parsely, bunches of turnips piled up

at the front, and bunches of carrots hanging round the sides, is quite a picture. The old man has something lively to say to every customer, and his horse knows where to stop, and when to go on, almost as well as his master. As the seasons go round, a change takes place in his merchandize. In the spring, he adds fresh radishes and young cabbages to his stock; in the summer, peas, beans, lettuces and cauliflowers; in the autumn, fruits of various kinds, and in the winter, laurel, prickly holly, and white-berried mistletoe. The dry wind may blow, or the rain come down in showers; the sun may throw his burning beams around, or the flakes of snow fall thickly one upon another; but they never hasten or delay the old man's appearance. At the accustomed hour his horse and cart are sure to stop at the doors of his customers. Now this old man has a singular custom of crying out in a sharp, shrill voice every time he serves a customer, "*Who's the next?*" Before he has received the money for his stuff, even while he mounts his cart to pull a bunch of turnips from the top of the pile, or weighs in his scales the potatoes he is selling, he he calls out, "*Who's the next? Who's the next?*"

The other morning as I sat with pen, ink, and paper, before me, musing on the various changes that had taken place in the last year; sometimes thinking of those who had left the neighbourhood to pitch their tent in another place; and sometimes reflecting on those who had been called away from

this world of mingled joys and sorrows; while I sat, thus musing, the sound of the old man's voice broke upon my ear, "*Who's the next? Who's the next?*" and lifting up my head I observed a hearse with its nodding plumes slowly passing by. Before it walked the mutes with their staves clothed; on each side were men with shorter staves, and behind came the mourning coaches. Whether a father of a family was being conveyed to his long home, or whether a beloved mother had been summoned to the eternal world, I could not tell; however this might be, the spirit of a fellow-creature had winged its way from time to eternity, and the breathless body was about to be committed to the grave, "Ashes to ashes, and dust to dust." No wonder, then, that the call of the old man affected me. "*Who's the next? Who's the next?*" cried he, at the very moment the hearse passed by, and the inquiry seemed to sink into my heart.

It is true that the old man had no thought of the breathless being about to be committed to the tomb; he only meant to inquire who would be his next customer, but to me it sounded awfully. A fellow mortal was being conveyed to the house appointed for all living, where thousands have already gone, where thousands must still go, and the thrilling inquiry, "*Who's the next?*" appeared to be directed to me and to all around.

If it pleased God always to remove the sick, and to leave those who are in health; to smite the aged,

and to preserve the young, we should be in less doubt about who would next be called away from the world, but this is not the case; the strong man is sometimes cut down in an instant like a blade of grass by the mower's scythe; the child, nay the babe at its mother's breast, is nipped and destroyed like a flower by the frost. We cannot tell, then, whose turn is approaching. "*Who's the next?*" is a fit inquiry for us all.

Is it not a little strange that we should think so much of things which are uncertain, and so little of what is certain? that we should prepare for what may never happen, and make no preparation at all for what must happen? The warning words of holy Scripture should tingle in every careless ear; for it will apply to us all. "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death." In a short time, it may be said to every one who fears not God, "Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee." If we read our Bibles more diligently, and pondered more thoughtfully on the manifold passages that bid us prepare for our latter end, we should look around us anxiously and the question, "*Who's the next?*" would be more frequently in our mouths.

It is said that the sultan Saladin had a shroud carried before him, to remind him of death; we all require something to remind us of the same thing, and you must not think hardly of me if I have gently and quietly led you along, by my account of

the old man and his cart of vegetables, to ponder a moment on your latter end. *Who is the next* among us to enter eternity we cannot tell, nor will it much matter, if we are prepared for death by having an interest in Christ Jesus.

There are thousands who have been in bondage all their lives long through fear of death; now, this is a sad state to be in, and yet there is no cure for it but a lively faith in the merits and sacrifice of our blessed Redeemer. If God is against us, we have nothing to hope; if He be our Friend, we have nothing to fear. What a mercy, then, instead of trembling at the thought of death, to rejoice in the hope set before us, and to be able to say, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Oh that we may all, then, seek the Saviour with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength: his promises are very precious, and what he has promised he is able and willing to perform. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."

Let us ponder these things more deeply, that when the question solemnly occurs to us, *Who is the next* to enter eternity? we may feel no fear, but, confiding in the promise of eternal life given in the

gospel of Jesus Christ, rather rejoice, and say, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

THE ALLEGORY.

"I HAVE," says one in a written communication to me, "a dear packet of letters of my father, as well as a broken likeness of him, and sketches drawn by his very own hand, and many other things that he gave me. These are all very pleasant to me *while he is away*, but *when we meet*, down will go the letters! Any one may take the likeness, the sketches he drew for me, and all the rest; for, hanging on his neck, I shall forget everything but himself, and look on nothing but his face!"

Now these things are an allegory! At least as such I will regard them. We have a goodly packet of letters of our heavenly Father in the Holy Scriptures! We have a likeness of Him, imperfect and broken though it be, in his glorious creation. We have sketches of his goodness in the changing seasons, and gifts of his love without number in providence and in grace; but glorious as these are now, when "death is swallowed up in victory."

they will be as nothing to us; for we shall then see the face of our heavenly Father, and he will be all in all.

THE SERMON.

The other day, after walking some time in the fields, I found myself, before I was aware, in the very middle of an animated sermon, preached to myself from the text, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" Acts xxiv. 8. "Look around, my soul," said I, "and believe nothing, or else believe every thing that God has spoken. Look around on the wonders of creation, and hearken again to the inquiry, 'Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?'" *Why?*

The sun was blazing in the firmament of heaven, the birds were warbling in the air, and the flowers and green trees were blooming on the earth; but they gave me no reply. There was no answer either from creation, or my own heart. I felt at that moment that I *did* believe in the resurrection: ay, as truly as if I had put my fingers into the nail-prints of my Redeemer's hands, and thrust my hand

into his side; and I cried out aloud in the fulness of my faith and joy, "My Lord and my God!" John xx. 25.

FAITH AND PATIENCE.

Oh, how I love to look through the telescope, for it brings distant things so very near, and makes them appear so very plain! Think not that I am speaking of the wooden tube and glasses sold by the optician. No! I am speaking of the telescope of faith given in mercy by the King of kings; for faith is the gift of God, Eph. ii. 8. How nimbly we walk! How strong we feel! How cheerfully we smile when looking through this telescope! Simeon looked through it, and cried out in transport, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Luke ii. 30. Stephen looked through it even when the stones were flying about him, and feared nothing, for he saw "the glory of God!" Acts vii. 55. Those who look through this telescope often feel alive, yea have their hearts filled with joy, while others are fast asleep or quaking with fear. It is otherwise when the telescope is put

down, things are farther off. It is then, "I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not *nigh*, Num. xxiv. 17. Still we must be patient; for it is through faith and patience that the promises are to be obtained. See Heb. vi. 12.

When we look through this telescope, God's arrangements appear to be exceedingly wise and good. It is indeed a wonderful and delightful arrangement that while the Father of mercies changes not, but remains the same "yesterday, to-day, and forever," everything is changing around us in nature, providence, and grace. We are often for hurrying things forwards, wanting the fruit before the blossom, and the blossom before the leaves; but it is of no use, we must be patient. "He that believeth shall not make haste." God is sometimes slow in his movements, but they are at length found to be grand, harmonious and glorious movements for all that.

THE STORK WITH THE BROKEN BILL.

"Without me ye can do nothing." John xv. 5.

I WELL remember seeing, some years ago, at the Zoological gardens in the Regent's park, a Stork with a broken bill: a portion, at least, of two inches of the lower mandible had by some accident been broken off, so that it was impossible for the poor bird to pick up a particle of food. Many of the visitors, especially of the younger part of them, threw fruit and pieces of cake and gingerbread into the aviary, some of which fell on the ground, and some in the water; but though the other birds freely partook of such food as suited their taste, the stork with the broken bill could not partake of the repast.

It was a distressing sight to see the poor bird pushing the food about with his upper mandible, and opening his bill from time to time, with the desire and expectation of laying hold of the tempting piece before him. For half an hour I stood watching him, and though never successful, the forlorn creature still went on vainly endeavoring to satisfy his craving appetite. The keeper who had the care of him, told me that the bill would be mended,

by adding a piece of wood, in the shape of a bill, to the broken part; but whether this was ever done I cannot say.

How often since that time, when vainly endeavouring to pick up consolation and profit from God's holy word, have I been reminded of the poor stork. With the bread of heaven before us, we may suffer hunger, but for Him who careth for us. He can accompany the reading of the word with the influence of his Holy Spirit. He who feedeth the ravens must feed us, or we die with famine; for we cannot feed ourselves.

THE OLD HOVEL.

Do you see that old shattered hovel yonder? There it stands, and there it has stood ever since I can remember any thing. Many a game of play have I had in the days of my boyhood behind the hay-ricks at Farmer Mitchell's, and many a time have I taken shelter from the storm in that old hovel.

You may, perhaps, think that it was new then; but no; it was much the same as it is now, except that there were not so many cobwebs in the corners

that the boards were not quite so black, and that the thatch had only half as many holes in it.

When I returned home from school, though the old pit was filled up, and the old pound taken quite away, yet the old hovel was standing there still, with its half thatched top, peeping over the little hedge, as ugly as ever.

After another absence of two or three years, I again returned home. "Oh," thinks I, "the old hovel has been down this many a day;" but no sooner did I pass the blacksmith's shop and get a view of farmer Mitchell's rick yard, than I saw it standing just where it did, and in much the same situation. There was an old worn-out cart-horse, that I suppose the farmer did not like to have killed, standing at the entrance of the old hovel; one seemed just to suit the other; they looked as though they belonged to other times. The new sign, the smart front of the tan-house, and the white painted finger-post were too smart for them; "Well," thinks I, "though the old hovel is still standing, it must be almost done over: one of these days down it will come."

This is a changing world: and if you look at a family of a dozen people ever so happy, it is ten to one but in a few years they will be found living in half a dozen different places; that is, if they are all then alive: "for what is our life? it is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away," James iv. 14.

Once again I left the village for a longer time than before; and when I came back, the church spire had been new shingled, and the weathercock regilt. A grand house had been built by Squire Vernon, near the clump of firs on the hill; the thatched cottages on the bank side were now all roofed with red tiles; farmer Mitchell's house had a new bow-window looking into the garden, and the old broken cross on the green was taken away. "Well," thinks I, observing these changes, "I suppose I shall hardly be able to point out the spot where the old hovel stood: no doubt it tumbled down shortly after I left the village." What was my surprise on looking over farmer Mitchell's fold-yard gate, towards the rick-yard, again to see the ugly black top of the old hovel? I scarcely believed it possible; yet, there it was; there it is now, and for ought I know, there it will be for years to come. Trees, cottages, and houses have been pulled down; yet there still stands the old hovel, with its cobweb-bed corners, broken boards, and shattered black thatch, uglier than ever.

It is an odd thing, but, so long have I been accustomed to look upon the old hovel, that, ugly as it is, I shall regret it when it falls. Down it must come, that is certain: it will soon be a heap of ruins, for it is little better than that now. Like the old hovel, the tenements about us, and the frail bodies we inhabit, may endure a few more summers and winters; but at last they must perish in the dust. Oh

may I ever be enabled to say with Job, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," Job xix. 25. Let us look for his mercy, that when our earthly tabernacles are dissolved, we may have "a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," 2 Cor. v. 1. Let us look, by faith, "for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Heb. xi. 10.

HAVE YOU WOUND UP THE CLOCK?

O how I love industry and energy, and how heartily do I hate a drawling, dragging, heavy heeled way of going through the world! It is now the first of January; let this be our motto for the future—"Up and be doing!" But what new plan have you got for the new year? Are we to go on in the old, humdrum way, as before, or are we to quicken our pace on the road to heaven? We have now a year less time than we had, in which to perform our journey. Is there no way, think you of jogging each other's elbows, of brushing up each other's energies, and encouraging each other's hearts? I warrant you there is; let us try if, looking upwards, and journeying onwards, we cannot

improve the snail's pace at which we have been moving. When I look at the magnitude of my own mercies, and the pitiful scraps and parings of time that I have devoted to the great Giver of all, I could blush crimson-red with shame, and bid "rivers of waters run down mine eyes." What error have I corrected in my heart? What Christian grace have I attained? What have I done for the welfare of my fellow-sinners? or what for the glory of the Redeemer? Alas! alas! Ephraim Holding has reason to hang down his head as the bulrush, and to hide his face with both his hands! But again I say, up and be doing, for the blubbering of the careless child will not mend his broken jug; neither will the vain regrets of an old man recall the time that he has wasted. The year is before us; now let us not be satisfied in wishing each other a happy return of the season! Let us not be content in talking about "a merry Christmas, and a happy new year," but rather make a fresh start together, with our faces turned toward heaven, and a song of thanksgiving in our mouths.

Ephraim Holding has a plan in his head that he thinks may be useful: a plan that will suit the inmates of a small house, and a great one; a labourer's cottage, and a kings palace. It may be practised with advantage by the poorest householder, and the Emperor of all the Russias! The plan is this—to make common things and common events useful; to turn even our every-day household affairs

to advantage. Why should we not get a lesson of regularity from the clock, of zeal from the fire, of polish from the tables, of steadiness from the chairs, of cleanliness from the broom, and of purity from the pump water? There are about a dozen observations, so common-place in domestic life, that they may be heard, one or other of them, in every house, on every day of the year. I shall try to turn these to advantage. The thought may be an odd one, but never mind that; come, let us give it a fair trial.

HAVE YOU WOUND UP THE CLOCK?

Have you wound up the clock? I ask you: *Have you wound up the clock?* This may appear, at first, a very unimportant question, but a little consideration may change our view of the case; we may see things in a different light, and be ready to acknowledge that the inquiry, *Have you wound up the clock?* is a very important one. I think I can make it appear that the circumstance, that one man is rich, while another remains poor—that one man is surrounded with comforts, while another is comfortless—that one man is a man of energy and enterprise, and another a man of apathy, unequal to any undertaking, depends pretty much upon this, that one has, and the other has not, *wound up the clock.*

If the clock be neglected, and not wound up at all, the whole domestic establishment will be thrown into confusion; order will be altogether destroyed,

and, without order, comfort is out of the question. If the clock be wound up, though the act occupy no more than two minutes, yet the clock will go for eight days. Thus, you see, by devoting two minutes to the clock, it repays you with eight day's labour. How pleased a farmer would be if he could get such an abundant harvest as this from the grain he commits to the ground? How brisk a tradesman would look if he could secure such a profit as this on the goods he sells! Whether you are a farmer, a tradesman, a rich landlord, or a poor householder, whoever, or whatever you may be, never neglect to *wind up the clock.*

But if such an advantage be obtained from the clock that ticks on the stairs, the piece of machinery with the painted face, the pointing fingers, the revolving wheels, and the swinging pendulum; if this be the case with the instrument called a clock, which is mere lifeless matter, how much more is it so with the human clock, the soul-animated frame of which we are composed? It is this clock, the body, soul, and spirit set in motion, of which Ephraim Holding speaks, when he says the question is a very, very important one—*Have you wound up the clock?*

We are all of us too much disposed to take what we have done as the proper measure or standard of what we ought to do, but this is an error; most of us might do much more and much better than we do in many ways; we only want *winding up.* It

is wonderful how active a man becomes when he has a bag of money before him, or a mad dog behind him. He is absolutely another creature; fresh life seems to pervade every limb, and he surprises even himself by his unwonted alacrity. When men run a race, they gird up their loins; when they go to battle, they gather up their strength: they are urged on by the object they have in view. Have you no commendable object before you for the new year? If you have, are you determined resolutely to pursue it? have you girded up your loins? have you gathered up your strength? *have you wound up the clock?*

Ephraim Holding has set his heart upon one thing, and that is, to set you all thinking and doing. Ay, whether you will or not, he is determined to *wind you up* to some useful purpose. An attempt shall be made, and made in the very spirit of integrity and determination too, to draw forth your good qualities, and to drive back your bad ones. Something must be done by me, and something must be done by you, and that something must be set about directly.

It matters but little whether many of our actions are done to-day or to-morrow, this year, or the next, or, indeed, whether they are done at all; but there are others that ought to be done instantly. It is of little use to put your letter in the post-office when the mail-bags are made up. If the farmer loses seed-time he reaps no harvest: if the mariner loses the wind and tide, his ship will be weather-bound;

besides, many actions, when once begun, go on of themselves. Put a kettle on the fire, and it will boil without further trouble; plant a sapling in the ground, and it will grow and blossom, and bear of its own accord; hoist a sail, and the winds of heaven will waft your boat onward, whether you are awake or asleep. Now, if there be any reason in these remarks, you will show your good sense in profiting by them.

When Ephraim Holding talks about kettles boiling, saplings growing, and sails being hoisted, he does not mean to direct your attention to mere kettles, saplings, and sails. No, no! He no more means these things than he meant a common clock, when he asked you the question, *Have you wound up the clock?*

He who sets the good resolutions and kindly affections of those around him bubbling and boiling, does more than put a kettle on the fire; he who plants a useful suggestion, a holy thought, or pious principle in the mind of others, does a better thing than setting a sapling; and they who disperse abroad sound knowledge, practical information, and true wisdom among society, may be more beneficially employed than in spreading the sails of a seventy-four. It is in this way that Ephraim Holding wishes to employ you. It is in this sense that he will inquire again and again, *Have you wound up the clock?*

Let us try to be more watchful over ourselves,

more forbearing towards others. Let us show more love for the young, more respect for the aged, and more kindness of heart for all. Oh, that envy, and hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness could be done away, and that kindness and affection, and mercy and peace, could fill our very souls!

I know a little of the machinery that is going on in your bosoms, as certainly as if I had seen it, and for this reason—I have acquainted myself with a little of the clockwork of my own; "as face answereth to face in a glass, so the heart of man to man." If, therefore, in the course of my remarks, I should tell you of a few things that you think no one knows but yourselves, be not surprised. If I remind you when a spindle is a little awry, when a cog-wheel has a broken tooth, or when the mainspring is out of order, take it not amiss; it will not be that I have a pleasure in revealing an infirmity, but because I wish your minutes and hours to be well regulated, for man's good and God's glory.

Again, I say, *Have you wound up the clock?* for if you have not, the sooner you do it the better.

When a minister is *wound up* to preach in a striking manner the everlasting gospel of truth, his words are heard by hundreds. When an author is properly *wound up* to write a useful, an interesting, and godly book, it is read by thousands; and these hundreds and thousands may thereby not only be benefited here, but hereafter. I said that the clock went for eight days, but you see that when the

human clock is once *wound up*, it may go through all time—ay, through all eternity!

Come, let us set to work, for we have all enough to do, and no one more than Ephraim Holding let our mercies be magnified, our neighbours edified, our sinful hearts mortified, and God glorified!

PUT SOME COALS ON THE FIRE.

When old Father Winter hobbles in among us, buttoned in his drab great-coat up to the chin, with a red worsted comforter round his mouth, thick-soled, high-topped shoes on his feet, and his hat powdered with snow, whiter than that of a miller; when he comes in with his grey locks hanging in icicles each side his pinched up face, and takes a chair, not with the air of one making a morning call, but rather like one who has made up his mind to become our guest for a season; when this occurs, there is a general disposition to pass the time comfortably with the old gentleman. If it so happen that he brings with him a hamper from the country, a turkey and a chine, a couple of ducks and chickens, a gammon of good bacon, or half a dozen pork

pies, such things are not without their uses; these domestic comforts are comforts, and will be acknowledged as such by every grateful spirit: but, even with all these, we should find the time pass rather gloomily if we did not very often repeat the familiar phrase, *Put some coals upon the fire.*

It is almost a question during a sharp frost, or disagreeable dabbling thaw, whether food or fire most administers to our comfort; and if, as I suppose, we must allow the former to take precedence of the latter, still fire is a friend of whose company we are very, very fond. When I think of the howling winds and fogs of November, and the biting frosts and sleet and snow of December and January, I need not ask whether you have well supplied your own fires with coal; I take it for granted that you have been "feelingly persuaded" to *put some coals upon the fire* very frequently; but let me ask if you have been equally anxious, or, indeed, if you have been anxious at all, to supply the hearths of your poorer neighbours?

Now, let a plain man speak a plain truth. They who are unmindful of the wants of others, deserve not that their own should be supplied. This may appear a hard saying, but it is a just one, and Ephriam Holding will repeat it. They who can allow a half-fed, half-clad, shivering wretch, to retire to a fireless home without assistance or sympathy, when they have the means of manifesting both, are undeserving of the kindly glow communicated by the

cheerful flame. I ask not if you have given, this winter, a waggon-load of faggots, or a cart-load of coals to the poor, but whether you have been the means of placing a single stick on the hearth of the aged, the fatherless, or the widow? If you are among those who clothe themselves warm, draw the curtains close, sit snugly by the warm hearth, and *put plenty of coals on the fire*, unmindful of those who have no warm clothes to put on, no curtains to draw, and not a lump of coal to kindle, Ephraim Holding will plainly tell you, that though you imagine yourselves to be grateful, it is a mockery to thank God for his mercies, while your hearts feel not, and your hands relieve not the miseries of others. One deed of kindness to your fellow-creatures would be a less questionable proof of gratitude to God, than the loudest thanksgiving of a covetous heart.

My opinion is, that the keenest frost of winter never pinches us sharp enough till it pinches something out of our pockets for those who are worse fed and worse clothed than ourselves. Now be persuaded to *put some coals on the fire* of your poorer neighbour.

In urging you to serve others, I urge you to serve yourselves; for who enjoys his dinner more than he who gives a portion to the famished beggar? or who sleeps more sweetly than the man who prevents the bed of another from being seized by the bailiff? We have all read, and we all believe the

words, "Blessed is he that remembereth the poor; the Lord shall deliver him in time of trouble."

You see clearly enough by this time, that Ephraim Holding is not likely to be content in talking only of fuel, or fire, in the common acceptation of the word. It would do him good to think that he had influenced any one of you to visit the almshouse, or the cottage of the poor; and if he knew that you had caused to be carried there, a hundred of coals, a bundle of faggots, or a little dried turf, he would thank you with a grateful heart; but there are other ways than these of *putting coals upon the fire.*

You have read the words in Holy Scripture, "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." If, then, by deeds of kindness we are to destroy the hatred of our enemies, how much more are we called upon, by the same means, to gain the love of our friends? Do you act kindly to your friends? Do you bear with them? Do you put a kind construction on their conduct? Do you win them by your affection? or, are you churlish, swift to take offence, and backward to forgive their errors? If you wish them to respect and love you, you must respect and love them. You must fan the flame of their affection; you must *put some coals upon the fire.*

It may be that you have hitherto thought there is but one way of putting coals on the fire, but Ephraim Holding could tell you of a thousand. Every

human being, who fosters a holy desire, and encour ages a warmhearted intention to do good in his own or another's heart, in the best sense of the expression is *putting coals upon the fire.*

Often have I sat in the house of God, when a faithful minister has entered on his sacred duties, in such a spirit of heartfelt devotion, and animated zeal. that it would have been impossible to doubt that he had been *putting coals on the fire* before he came. The word of God had been "read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested;" the throne of grace had been humbly sought; the gift of utterance, and the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, had been fervently supplicated and received. It has done me good to see such a servant of God, such a messenger of mercy to fallen men, come forth with the strength of a giant refreshed with wine, in his Master's cause. How faithfully has he warned sinners! how fervently has he glorified the Savoiur! Oh, it is an excellent thing to *put coals upon the fire.*

We cannot all be ministers, and you, like Ephraim Holding, may not have assigned you so high, so honourable, and so holy a calling; but still we may all speak a word in season to those around us. We may mildly reprove the thoughtless, we may cordially encourage our fellow pilgrims on their way to the golden gates of the heavenly city.

No doubt you have many times attended the public meetings of pious and benevolent Societies. Sometimes, on these occasions, the resolutions are

passed, and the business moves on, slowly, as though the affairs of the assembly were being dragged along in a broad-wheeled waggon, or a funeral hearse. Suddenly, some speaker, with a heart of zeal, and a tongue of eloquence, mounts the platform; his arguments, like a tide or torrent, bear down all opposition; his words begin to warm the assembly like a cordial; eyes sparkle, pulses play, bosoms beat, his animating influence spreads like a flame, and a spirit of Christian love and holy joy animates the rejoicing throng. The remainder of the resolutions are passed with animation, and are borne along as if carried in a triumphal car. This is what I call *putting coals upon the fire.*

If you and I cannot speak in public, we can surely act in private; and the poorest man ought not to withhold his penny in a good cause, merely because he cannot give a pound.

You see that Ephraim Holding is anxious that you should be doing something. A waggon-load of good wishes will neither relieve the sick, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, nor draw back the wanderer to the paths of peace. It is better to give a cup of cold water to one thirsty traveller, than merely to wish for the welfare of the world.

We all know, too well, what it is, in our resentments, to *put coals upon the fire.* However fierce may be the flame, we are prone to add to its fury. We cherish the spark, we fan the flame, and feed the conflagration. We forget that "a soft answer

turneth away wrath," while we practically remember that "grievous words stir up anger." This is to our reproach.

Ephraim Holding wants not to weary you with counsel; but, if he knew how, he would make your hearts burn within you with desire to do good; your thoughts, words, and deeds, should breathe the very spirit of kindness and love. Look around you on the earth; what proofs of the goodness of God do we find! Every herb, fruit, and flower proclaims it. Look at the heavens, either when illumined by the sun, or lit up with stars.

> If thus the sky above our head,
> Which God beneath his feet has spread,
> With floods of living light excels,
> What must the heaven be where He dwells!

The very thought should influence us to *put coals on the fire* of our slumbering zeal. God's love for us should increase our love for Him continually, and for one another. The wonders of creation should lead us to the greater wonders of redemption; and the blessings we participate in time, increase our desires after those of eternity.

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