



Nancy
Hanks
Lincoln
Public
Library

LIGHT AND CLOUD

DARK VALLEY.

LIGHT AND GOOD

IN THE

DARK VALLEY

BY

THE

REV.

THE

REV.

THE

REV.

Strong, Lewis

LIGHT AND CLOUD

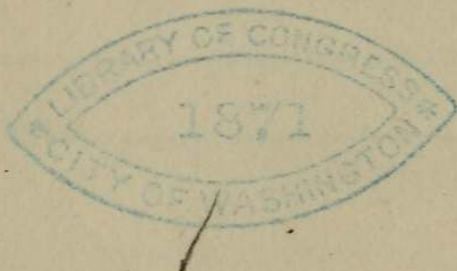
IN THE

DARK VALLEY.

By a Layman.

17

“Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.”—1 PET. ii. 7.



PHILADELPHIA:

American Sunday-School Union,

No. 316 CHESTNUT STREET.

NEW YORK: No. 147 NASSAU ST.....BOSTON: No. 9 CORNHILL.

LOUISVILLE: No. 103 FOURTH ST.

1853

BV4905
S83

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1853, by the
AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION,
in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the Eastern District of
Pennsylvania.

☛ No books are published by the AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION without the sanction of the Committee of Publication, consisting of fourteen members, from the following denominations of Christians, viz. Baptist, Methodist, Congregationalist, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Lutheran, and Reformed Dutch. Not more than three of the members can be of the same denomination, and no book can be published to which any member of the Committee shall object.

923-15

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION.....	7
GLIMMER OF HOPE.....	15
INSENSIBILITY.....	31
A DESPONDING CHRISTIAN.....	40
DYING ANXIETIES.....	50
A YOUNG DISCIPLE.....	58
ACTIVE BENEVOLENCE.....	70
CHRISTIAN CONSISTENCY.....	86
CANDID INQUIRER.....	99
PERFECT PEACE.....	117
EXTRACT OF A LETTER.....	129

CONTENTS

Introduction 1

Chapter I. The History of the United States 15

Chapter II. The Constitution of the United States 35

Chapter III. The Federal Government 55

Chapter IV. The State Governments 75

Chapter V. The Local Governments 95

Chapter VI. The Judiciary 115

Chapter VII. The Executive Department 135

Chapter VIII. The Legislative Department 155

Chapter IX. The Administration of Justice 175

Chapter X. The Administration of the Executive Department 195

Chapter XI. The Administration of the Legislative Department 215

Chapter XII. The Administration of the Judiciary 235

Chapter XIII. The Administration of the Executive Department 255

Chapter XIV. The Administration of the Legislative Department 275

Chapter XV. The Administration of the Judiciary 295

Chapter XVI. The Administration of the Executive Department 315

Chapter XVII. The Administration of the Legislative Department 335

Chapter XVIII. The Administration of the Judiciary 355

Chapter XIX. The Administration of the Executive Department 375

Chapter XX. The Administration of the Legislative Department 395

Chapter XXI. The Administration of the Judiciary 415

Chapter XXII. The Administration of the Executive Department 435

Chapter XXIII. The Administration of the Legislative Department 455

Chapter XXIV. The Administration of the Judiciary 475

Chapter XXV. The Administration of the Executive Department 495

Chapter XXVI. The Administration of the Legislative Department 515

Chapter XXVII. The Administration of the Judiciary 535

Chapter XXVIII. The Administration of the Executive Department 555

Chapter XXIX. The Administration of the Legislative Department 575

Chapter XXX. The Administration of the Judiciary 595

Chapter XXXI. The Administration of the Executive Department 615

Chapter XXXII. The Administration of the Legislative Department 635

Chapter XXXIII. The Administration of the Judiciary 655

Chapter XXXIV. The Administration of the Executive Department 675

Chapter XXXV. The Administration of the Legislative Department 695

Chapter XXXVI. The Administration of the Judiciary 715

Chapter XXXVII. The Administration of the Executive Department 735

Chapter XXXVIII. The Administration of the Legislative Department 755

Chapter XXXIX. The Administration of the Judiciary 775

Chapter XL. The Administration of the Executive Department 795

Chapter XLI. The Administration of the Legislative Department 815

Chapter XLII. The Administration of the Judiciary 835

Chapter XLIII. The Administration of the Executive Department 855

Chapter XLIV. The Administration of the Legislative Department 875

Introduction.

THE writer of the following sketches is neither qualified, nor does he wish to be regarded as attempting, to instruct others, with theological exactness, in reference to any of the subjects they embrace. Having often enjoyed the privilege, however, of being present at the bedside of the sick and dying, he has thought that a brief account of his occasional interviews with some of them, with some notice of their previous characters, might possibly be interesting and useful.

The subject of death, in all its various aspects, as a mere physical change, as

the termination of our connection with the scenes of the present life, or as the commencement of a future and untried state of being, can hardly fail to awaken the most earnest solicitude, and very often, no doubt, the most distressing fears.

To what extent the extinction of our mere animal life is to be dreaded, or what may be or commonly are the sufferings connected with that event, is only to be learned by observation, or from the Scriptures. It is often alluded to in the Bible, but seldom, perhaps, if ever, in terms fitted to awaken the apprehension of great bodily distress. But it is spoken of, nevertheless, as a *penalty*, as possessing a *sting*, as something terrific, to the wicked at least, in its nature or consequences. And this representation is

abundantly confirmed by the circumstances which are often seen to attend it. The restlessness and struggles and apparently indescribable anguish which are sometimes observable, even in the case of the dying believer, cannot but alarm our fears, whatever may be our personal character. But when it is remembered that as well in the case of impenitence as of open profligacy, the death of the body is represented to be but the precursor of the second death—the death of the soul—thus introducing it to that state of existence “where the worm dieth not”—who can look forward to the extinction of his animal life merely, without feelings of the profoundest and most inexpressible interest!

It may be true, and to some extent

probably is true, that the changes which the body undergoes in death, as well as those anterior and preparatory to its dissolution, may be designed to impress us with such a sense of its terrors, that every possible preparation may be made, in our own case, for an event which is so often accompanied by apparently the intensest suffering in the case of others. What degree of actual pain, however, is endured by the sufferer himself—whether the fluttering pulse, the oppressed respiration, the writhings of the body, and the distortions of the countenance, are (or, as medical men generally suppose, are not) just indications of the sufferings of which the patient himself is conscious—will probably, for the wisest reasons, remain altogether uncertain.

Whatever may be the fact, and though there is no escape from the event itself, He who gave life, and at his pleasure takes it away, has made the most ample provision for the succour and support of all who will accept of it, in this and every other emergency.

Obnoxious as we are to the penalties of his law, with a penitent trust in Christ we may regard God as our reconciled Father and Friend—one who, in all the journey of life, will guard us from calamity, or make that calamity the means of advancing our ultimate happiness; and when the hour of death comes, will impart to us peace as a river; or if suffering—acute, intense suffering—be our allotment, will give us grace to endure, as seeing him who is invisible, and overrule that very suffer-

ing for our more complete enjoyment of his own infinite love.

But however important, in the view of every wise man, is earnest and immediate attention to those great subjects connected with his everlasting well-being, what multitudes, not only of the more ignorant classes, but of the refined, intelligent, and educated also, are suffering the things of this world to exert an influence over them at once absorbing and disastrous! Wealth, professional eminence, and other forms of temporal good are their great objects of pursuit; and though every fear of disappointment will stimulate to renewed effort for securing them, those ENDURING AND ETERNAL REALITIES—perhaps just at hand—are all *practically* neglected and forgotten!

The letter from a clergyman, with which this little volume is concluded, is so appropriate, and contains so many suggestions of a most happy practical nature, that it gives the author great satisfaction to be permitted to make it public.

Reader! may God dispose *us* to act habitually *with a wise reference to the future*,—comfort and sustain and cheer us in the hour of dissolution,—and when life is ended, admit us, through the merits of Jesus Christ, to his more immediate and blissful presence, in heaven.

Glimmer of Hope.

NOT many years since, a gentleman of high distinction as well in his profession as in public life, was somewhat suddenly obliged to retire from both, in consequence of ill health; and much solicitude was awakened, on the part of many of his friends, in reference to his religious character. He was a man of fine intellectual powers, and had generally manifested great respect for the institutions of religion. On some occasions, however, especially in earlier life, his course of conduct had been entirely at war with the teachings of God's word,—so much

so, that when the disease under which he was sinking apparently approached its crisis, a very strong desire was felt that he might be made acquainted with his danger, and be led, with a distinct understanding of his guilt, to look to Jesus Christ,—and to him alone,—for salvation.

Among those who regarded the situation of this friend with great interest, was the writer of this article; and he earnestly desired, that one possessing so many excellent traits of character might be brought at once, and before the powers of his mind were at all impaired, to a knowledge of his true relations to God, and to a penitent and cordial acceptance of those offers of mercy held out to every broken-hearted sinner, in the gospel of Christ.

For this purpose, and with a view to aiding in the accomplishment of an object of such magnitude, I repeatedly called upon my sick friend, and sought, in every possible way, to direct his attention to the perils and pressing necessities of his condition. But every suggestion bearing upon personal character or the importance of preparation for death, seemed to be rendered ineffectual by an apparent endeavour on his part to confine our conversation to the subject of bodily health, public interests, or other kindred topics, having no immediate connection with spiritual concerns. So plainly, indeed, was this purpose evinced, that after repeated efforts, at different interviews, to make myself useful, I finally concluded that if I could not be allowed to benefit my friend, I

would at least no longer annoy him—merely remarking, as I withdrew, that if at any time my services should in any way be desired, I should be most happy to render them.

Such continued to be the state of things for a number of days, and I began to despair of any opportunity of helping to prepare my friend for his great and last change. He was not, indeed, a very intimate friend; and it was the more difficult, on that very account, to introduce a subject which, had our intimacy been ever so great, must of course have been a trying, and, in some respects, a very painful one.

Some two or three weeks after, however, I received a message from a lady in the neighbourhood, suggesting that she had learned, through the wife of our

sick friend, that he would now be particularly gratified to see me; and after asking, with unusual fervency, the aids of divine grace, I hastened to his house, determined, with God's help, to speak so plainly that I could not be misunderstood, and so affectionately and earnestly withal, that, if possible, the heart of my friend might be subdued and melted.

To my amazement, he not only received me with the cordiality of a brother, but introduced, at once, the subject which of all others seemed at such a moment to be most appropriate. His health had manifestly declined since I last saw him; and after adverting to the prospect before him, he told me, with all frankness, that though accustomed heretofore to look at religion and religious things with the eye of a phi-

losopher, he had now begun to feel, for the first time, his own personal interest in them; and knowing as he did my desire to be useful, he had expressed a wish to see me, that we might confer together upon subjects of inexpressible importance to his welfare.

Thus invited, I spoke to him at once of his situation; of the approaching termination of his sickness; of the blessings he had enjoyed; of the opportunities God had given him of knowing his will; of his practical disregard of that will; of his guilt and danger; and of the refuge still left him, if, with a penitent and contrite heart, and a humble reliance upon the merits of Christ, he would betake himself to it.

He listened to me with the kindest attention, and when I proposed reading, as-

sured me he would hear me with a great deal of pleasure. Taking the Bible, I asked him what part I should select; and upon his desiring me to choose for myself, I read to him the fifteenth chapter of Luke, containing, among others, the parable of the prodigal son; and never had this beautiful narrative seemed to me more touching or effective. Its exquisite delicacy was surpassed only by its power. The folly and madness of the prodigal, who, abandoning country and friends, had wasted his substance in riotous living, and thus blasted his present happiness and his hopes for the future, seemed to awaken the deepest emotion; and when, adverting to the abundance in his father's house, while he himself perished with hunger, he resolved, having come to himself, to return

and cast himself upon his father's love, confessing and deploring his folly and sins, my poor friend groaned aloud. But it was only when that father whom he had so grieved and offended, while he was yet a great way off, saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him, that the heart of my friend absolutely melted; and he seemed ready, as the tears ran down his cheeks, to pour it out like water. Oh! are not these, I asked myself, tears of penitence and faith and gratitude and love? Is not the heart which manifests such emotion finally and effectually touched by the Spirit of God?

Our interview was closed with prayer; and when I took my leave, he invited me, in the kindest and most cordial manner, to see him again, and often.

And I shall never forget the joy which pervaded my whole soul as, on my way to my own dwelling, I praised God for his kindness, and entreated his blessing upon an intimacy thus propitiously begun.

I frequently met him afterward, and no one could have given me, unpretending as my claims upon his attention were, a more cordial welcome. His mind continued to be impressed with a deep sense of his sinfulness, and with the wonderful forbearance of God in not only sparing his life, but still holding out to him proffers of mercy, and allowing him to indulge a trembling hope, that through the merits of Christ his sins, though as scarlet, might become white as snow, and though red like crimson, might become as wool.

Week after week passed away, but, blessed be God, while the body was failing and its hold upon life gradually breaking off, the spirit of my friend seemed to be clinging with an increased tenacity to Christ, as its almighty and only Helper.

At one of our interviews, and I think at the very first after that the details of which have been already given, my sick friend, after assuring me of his bitter regrets in view of the sins of his past life, and of his full conviction that there was no possible salvation for him but upon the terms of the gospel, inquired of me, with apparently deep solicitude, whether I thought, after all, there was in his case any ground for hope? With a view to guarding him, if possible, against self-deception, I told him

what in my opinion constituted true evangelical repentance, inquiring, at the same time, whether it was to be supposed that when he had devoted the whole powers of his soul, in early and mature life, to the service of the world, God would be likely to accept the very refuse of life—the lame, the halt, and the blind—as a suitable consecration to himself,—reminding him, nevertheless, that the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, and that in him there was mercy for the very chief of sinners.

Alluding to this conversation, not long before his death, he thanked me for the discouraging language I had then used, assuring me that though grieved and distressed by it for the moment, as absolutely cruel, he thought its influence had been a happy one, rendering him

more watchful over his own heart, and guarding him, he trusted, against presumption.

On one occasion he intimated, in a very delicate and somewhat timid manner, his wish, if it was proper, to make an open avowal of his confidence in Christianity, as furnishing the only sufficient ground of a sinner's hope of salvation; evidently desiring, if there should be no objection to it, to make a public profession of his faith in Christ, and to partake with his people of that bread and wine which show forth the Lord's death until he come. But I told him that such a course, in the case of one sick and unable to attend the ordinances of God's house, was rather unusual among Christians of our denomination; that God would no doubt accept the will for

the deed, if he was in truth a penitent believer in Christ; and that uncertain in their issue as most instances of a death-bed repentance were, such a proceeding, even if it could be brought about, might be productive of more evil than good;—when he seemed satisfied, and never alluded to the subject afterward.

I had frequent opportunities of seeing this dear friend,—for by this time he had become *very* dear to me, and I could not have loved him more had he been my own brother,—as well by night as by day. For some time before his death he required watchers, and I was occasionally privileged to sit by him during the night, and minister as I could to his comfort.

On one occasion, but a little before he died, when his rest was very much broken, (for he slept only a few minutes

at a time, always when he awoke evincing by some expression or implication his gratitude to God, as the giver of every good gift,) he had fallen asleep, when upon his awaking, I repeated to him, in a low but distinct tone of voice, these lines, from Watts's version of the fifty-first Psalm :

“ A broken heart, my God, my King,
Is all the sacrifice I bring ;
The God of grace will ne'er despise
A broken heart for sacrifice.”

He was at this time very feeble, his conversation, slight as it was, being broken up into fragments, two or three words only connected together : but to my surprise, the moment I stopped, he began, and repeated, in a manner inexpressibly touching, the verse preceding—

“Though—I have grieved—thy Spirit—Lord,—
His help—and comfort—still afford—
And let a wretch—a *wretch*’—

repeating and emphasizing the word,

“come near—thy throne—
To plead the merits—of thy Son.”

Oh, what must have been the emotions of a mere man of the world, however flushed with public office or popular favour, could he have been present at that moment, and heard those broken midnight utterances from a man, once as ambitious in his views, as much the idol of the people, and with as high intellectual endowments, as himself!

But the scene was already closing. A day or two after, and my sick and suffering friend was evidently near death. He whispered a wish that I would en-

gave once more in prayer with him, replying to my inquiry as to the state of his mind, that he had "a glimmer—a *glimmer* of hope" still. When I called again, the spirit had just taken its flight, and all was over.

Insensibility.

WHILE the Bible, in its offers of mercy, holds out all needful encouragement to persons at every period and in every condition of life, a peculiar blessing, in this respect, seems to rest upon the young, and to them is given the most unqualified assurances, that earnestness of effort to secure the favour of God, through the mediation of Christ, will be crowned with success. “They that seek me early *shall* find me.”

In childhood and youth, truths, which at a subsequent period might be entirely powerless, are often cordially embraced.

The depravity of our common nature has not usually, at that early age, become so indurated, as it were, by resistance to the calls of the gospel and by habits of vice, as almost to preclude the possibility of salvation. How often will the heart of a child melt under those representations of the forbearance and compassion and love of God, which fail to awaken, in the minds of men, long strangers to him, the slightest emotion! The very nature of the latter seems to become more and more obdurate, as life advances—just as the sapling, to-day so tender and pliable, becomes in process of time as unyielding and impenetrable as the gnarled oak of a hundred winters.

I have seldom, if ever, been more sensible of the gratitude we ought to feel for early religious impressions, than when

endeavouring, many years ago, to convince a man, some sixty or seventy years old, of his need of an interest in Christ.

In our monthly distribution of tracts, I had occasion to visit one family, in the outskirts of the town, which had been represented to me as a field for benevolent effort, of the most rigorous and unpromising nature, and hardly susceptible of cultivation. But having engaged in the enterprise, I was bound to go forward; and, asking the blessing of God, I directed my course toward the miserable hovel they occupied.

It was a dark, rainy, cheerless afternoon in November, and the aspect of every thing around me was so chilling and desolate, that my heart almost sank within me as I entered the house. In our large cities, the lower classes are

often found crowded promiscuously into chambers and cellars of the most loathsome nature; but I have never, in the country, met such a collection of unsightly persons, of both sexes, as I found assembled upon that occasion. It seemed to comprise every thing which could dishearten and discourage.

After explaining, in few words, my purpose in coming, and conversing as well as I could with the different individuals or clusters of individuals I found there, I proposed praying with them; and while one of the number, who had long been a professor of religion, encouraged me to proceed, the rest, looking askance at each other, and hardly seeming to understand what was intended, were evidently at a loss whether to scoff or be quiet. Finally, however, they con-

cluded to hold their peace, and continued to do so until I had finished, when, with a few words of kindness, I bade them adieu, and departed.

Among this motley group—some of them avowedly Universalists, but most of them of no religion at all—was the aged man I have before mentioned; and his manner was comparatively so grave and respectable, that I hoped to be able at some future time to see him again, and converse with him more fully and freely on the subject of his prospects and hopes.

I had not then, nor have I since, been particularly informed as to his origin, or employment, or habits of life. All I ever learned is, that he was, as the phrase is, "*a hard character*"—at some periods of his life, probably, very intemperate—and accustomed to associate, from

choice or necessity, with the degraded and vicious. And yet his general appearance, when contrasted with that of those around him, was fitted to awaken a very favourable impression.

At our next monthly distribution, and on various similar occasions afterward, I had repeated opportunities of talking with him. But it was to little or no purpose. He treated me respectfully, and listened to me sometimes very kindly, but generally with indications of impatience that I should be troubling him upon subjects for which he had no regard.

During the spring or summer of the next year, he became severely ill, and I saw him repeatedly while thus on his sick-bed, and under circumstances which promised a more favourable result than I had been allowed to anticipate. He

heard me more patiently than he had usually done before—seemed grateful that I had not forgotten him, and sometimes, I almost hoped, began to feel his necessities and perils. But still no substantial progress was made. There he was, and there he seemed likely to continue—confessing, in general terms, that he was a sinner, acknowledging that there was no hope for him but through the mediation of Jesus Christ—and yet without any apparent solicitude for the salvation He had purchased, and which was then urged upon his acceptance.

In this state of mind he had continued for some days from the commencement of his illness, when it became more and more obvious that he had but a short time to live. When he was in health, I had represented to him, in the strongest

manner I could, the folly and madness of the course he was pursuing, and urged and entreated him to listen to the overtures of the gospel: and I went over the same ground now, conjuring him not to throw away his only possible chance for life. But while continuing to express his gratitude for my good wishes, and manifesting sometimes almost a desire to become a Christian that I might be gratified, his heart continued entirely unmoved—he had no sense of guilt, sent up no cries for deliverance, and went steadily forward, apparently fearing nothing, and caring for nothing. *A cold, stupid, cruel insensibility seemed to have seized upon his very nature, from which there was no possibility of escape!*

In this situation—wretched, impoverished, and almost forsaken of God and

man—he lingered a few hours longer—when, alas! without any apparent change for the better, his spirit was ushered into the presence of his Maker, and the record of his miserable life sealed up unto the judgment!

A Desponding Christian.

How mysterious, often, are the ways of Providence! Some of the disciples of Christ seem to be led gently along through life, no worldly trouble burdening their spirits, and no distrust of his love impairing their present peace, or disturbing their hopes for the future; while others, as far advanced perhaps in Christian attainments, are suffered, sometimes for years together, to grope their way in darkness, their ears meanwhile ringing with the shouts of the enemy, and their hearts trembling with anxiety, lest after all they should fail of their heavenly home, the New Jerusalem, the city of the Great King!

An instance of this deep depression occurred some years ago in my own neighbourhood; but the darkness which then rested upon the mind of that friend has been dissipated. She has seen Him whom her soul loved face to face; and if she now looks back at all upon her trials and conflicts in this world, it is only that, as she gazes at the abyss she has passed, and the mere plank by means of which she escaped it, she may send up new songs of thanksgiving to Him who delivered her from the snares of the adversary, and has brought her into his own presence to be a partaker of his glory.

The case I allude to was that of an elderly lady, who at an earlier period had seemed like a mother in Israel, her character and course of life having been such for years as to encourage the strong-

est confidence that she was a sincere disciple of Jesus Christ. For some reason or other, (probably in consequence of ill health,) she had become, at the period of my first acquaintance with her, a most desponding Christian, doubting even whether she was a Christian at all, and ready often to sink into the earth, under the supposed frown of that Being whom she had once hypocritically, (as she now thought,) professed to love. Oh it was sad, week after week, and year after year, to see this patient and gentle being borne down by such inexpressible suffering; manifestly regarding Christ as the chiefest among ten thousand, and yet (and the very thought was anguish) no Saviour for her; solicitous that her husband, a professor also of religion, might not be deceived—that her children might

all become disciples of Christ, or hold out to the end if already such—and that her neighbours and friends might be careful to secure, first and above all things, that enduring treasure which, alas! she had herself so madly and wickedly lost!

She was a lady somewhat above the ordinary stature, of a full habit, with large dark eyes, soft in their expression, and sometimes evincing the deepest tenderness, as I attempted to dissipate her fears, and bring her back to that state of loving confidence in Christ she had once enjoyed. But my efforts were all in vain. Sometimes she not only doubted whether she was a Christian, but feared even (so plain seemed to her the hopelessness of her case) that she had committed the unpardonable sin!

I remember on one occasion, when

apprehensions of this sort had been expressed, the sweet involuntary smile she gave me, upon my attempting, and as I thought successfully, to show her the groundlessness of her fears.

She had discovered, as usual, great solicitude for others, and especially for her husband; and was grieved and distressed that she was herself so utterly without hope, and even beyond the possibility of salvation. Was there any blessing more important for him or for her children, I asked, than an interest in Christ, and did she not desire it for them more than any thing and every thing else?

“Oh yes,” she replied; “they are lost—lost—without it.”

“But if Christ,” I said, “can save them, he can save you too.”

“ Ah !” said she, “ I am such a sinner ! I have despised the riches of his love ! I have sinned away my day of grace ! and he now leaves me, and justly leaves me, to perish.”

“ But what,” I again asked, “ could induce you to give up seeking his favour, or what would be a compensation for the loss of it ?”

“ Nothing, nothing,” she quickly replied. “ I would not do it for worlds.”

“ And do you, then, really desire to love him,—to be able to regard him as *your* Saviour ? Are you sure that this is your sincere, earnest, importunate prayer ?”

“ Oh,” said she, “ I long to be his ; to be transformed into his image, and fitted for his kingdom ! But I never shall be. I must go down to my grave sorrowing.”

“Now this is very strange!” said I. “You deem an interest in Christ to be invaluable; you ask it earnestly for your husband and children; there is nothing on earth you desire for yourself so much, and for worlds you would not give up Christ! Did you ever hear of his casting off a soul which was clinging to him, and to him alone, for salvation? Never—never. He has not, my dear friend, cast you off; and the very earnestness of your desire to love him shows conclusively that *you do love him.*”

She smiled for a moment, but it was only for a moment; and her countenance, when I left her, had settled down again into its accustomed gloom.

Such continued to be the state of her mind for many months; and in my va-

rious interviews with her, she exhibited such sweetness of disposition, and such earnest longings to be made meet for heaven, that long before her death I had learned to regard her with the affection of a child. I hoped that, sooner or later, the cloud which rested upon her mind would be taken off, and that she would finally die in peace. And such was the event.

I had heard of her increasing illness, and called to see her; and the moment I cast my eyes upon her serene, placid countenance, I perceived that the cloud had been lifted, in token not only that the light of God's countenance was again resting upon her soul, but, as circumstances afterward proved, that her earthly tabernacle was about to be broken up, and her journey heavenward

resumed and ended. Approaching her bedside, and observing that she recognised me, I expressed my pleasure at seeing her again, and said to her, inquiringly, and yet with a trembling heart—"I am sure you *now* love Jesus Christ?"

"I hope so—I think I do,"—she softly whispered in reply. But she was too feeble for conversation; and when we had breathed one short prayer in her behalf, I retired from her bedside. It was the last time.

Her funeral was attended some few days after; and for a moment, as I remembered her sweet, gentle character, and her long-continued suffering under the supposed hidings of God's countenance, I mourned over her as for a

mother. But the darkness had passed away; the light of heaven was now beaming upon her spirit; and *all was peace.*

Dying Anxieties.

THE importance of early and habitual preparation for the closing scenes of life is never more apparent than when we are attending the bedside of the dying. Even in sickness, especially if it be severe, there is so much to be done to meet the wants of the body, such incessant applications are to be made for its support or relief, and the attention of ourselves and others is so constantly occupied by the efforts requisite for its restoration to health, that no appropriate opportunity seems to be left for those religious inquiries and exercises which,

in the view of all, have now become indispensable.

In addition to this, how often is the body racked with pain, or the mind so reduced to a state of utter weakness that even very slight attention to our worldly concerns is found to be exceedingly onerous, if not entirely impossible! How feeble must be the hope, therefore, that at such a season any thing for the advancement of our spiritual welfare will be accomplished, or perseveringly attempted.

But if such be the case, while any prospect exists of our restoration to health, how deplorable the condition of one who, when the shades of death are gathering around him, is endeavouring, for the first time, to prepare for those eternal scenes which are just

ready to open upon his vision! The work of a life is to be compressed into a mere point—of a few hours at best, perhaps a few moments only—and this though all is at stake, and is in imminent danger of being lost!

I know not when the importance of such early and habitual preparation has been more deeply impressed upon my mind, than in the case I am about to mention.

The individual alluded to was a gentleman I had long known, and whose character combined so many excellent and noble qualities, that he had secured the sincerest regard and affection of a large circle of friends. He was the son of a clergyman, and had been carefully taught from his earliest childhood his true relations to God and man. Pro-

bably few had enjoyed more favourable opportunities for becoming acquainted with the leading truths of the Bible, or their immediate connection with our duties or destinies. At the same time, he was a man of rare intellectual powers, and for years had evinced an unusual capacity for the various public and professional services he was called to perform.

But, unfortunately, though his attention had been particularly awakened in early life to the subject of religion, he had contented himself, for the most part, with speculating upon the truths of Christianity, and admiring their wonderful adaptedness to meet the necessities of our nature, without allowing them to obtain that control over his heart and life so indispensable to his

highest happiness in this world or his suitable preparation for the world to come.

About the period of middle age, when all his faculties were in their highest vigour, and he was looking forward with confidence to a long life of distinction and usefulness, his health began to decline. His countenance soon indicated some constitutional derangement; and though little apprehension was at first indulged that his illness would prove very serious or protracted, he was continually though very gradually failing, until at last he was obliged to retire from his accustomed employments altogether, and was regarded as a man whose ultimate recovery was, to say the least of it, doubtful. Soon he was confined to his house, and then to his bed;

and yet such was the vigour of his constitution, that both he and his friends continued to hope that he might still throw off the disease which oppressed him, and finally regain his health.

But it was otherwise ordered. Not many months passed before it was understood that his recovery was hopeless. The opinion of his physicians having been communicated to him, that he could live but a few hours, the importance of those eternal realities upon which he was soon to enter, began to press upon his mind with a weight almost insupportable. After repeated entreaties that he would penitently and heartily commit himself to Jesus Christ, as the only Saviour of sinners, one friend alone remained at his bedside, in the hope that he might become more

composed. Seeing, however, that his patient was still distressed and restless, he urged him to forbear conversation, and endeavour to obtain a little sleep.

“How can I think of it,” the sufferer replied, “when eternity is so near, and every moment so precious!” But upon being further urged, that he might be the better fitted for his religious duties, he at last consented, yet upon one condition—that his friend would spend the whole time in prayer, and importunate prayer, in his behalf.

“Oh that God,” he exclaimed, as he closed his eyes, and with an apparent agony of earnestness—“Oh that God would have mercy upon me, and receive me into his kingdom, though it be but as the humblest child there!”

But, alas! though he lived until the

next morning, there was no distinct and satisfactory evidence that he had found peace in believing; and in what state of preparation he finally died, is known only to Him who is the Resurrection and the Life.

How true it is that, in reference to an interest of such indescribable magnitude, nothing should be left to the contingencies and distresses of a dying hour!

A Young Disciple.

WHAT an inexpressible tenderness is sometimes awakened by the gospel of Christ! And while imparting the most elevated views of his character, what an indescribable charm does it throw over believers, in their intercourse with each other! It seems to bind together the hearts of the young, while it often prompts those of more mature years to regard the lambs of the flock, and especially such of them as have been recently gathered into the fold of the Good Shepherd, with a solicitude and tenderness of love hardly to be surpassed.

I remember with great distinctness the delight I felt many years ago, when first informed that a young lady of my acquaintance had become interested in the subject of religion; and how deeply the value of the intelligence I then received was impressed upon my mind by the sad events which soon after occurred!

The young lady I speak of was the daughter of a very near neighbour and friend; and at the time of the occurrence referred to, must have been about eighteen or twenty years old. She was not, perhaps, beautiful, but the expression of her countenance, even before religion had given to it its exquisite softness, was singularly attractive, and combined with the sweet tones of her voice, the symmetry and grace of her

slight figure, the gentleness of her manners, and the intelligence discoverable in her conversation, to awaken the most entire confidence in the peculiar loveliness of her character.

But with every thing in her personal appearance and general deportment to inspire the most affectionate regard, one element of excellence was still wanting, for the absence of which nothing could compensate. With all her loveliness, her aspirations never extended beyond the bounds of the present life. This flower, so rich in its form and colouring, seemed to be but one of those flowers of the field to which our Saviour alluded, springing up in the morning only to be cut down at night, and then lost, and ere long forgotten. Thanks, ten thousand thanks to Him, our fears for the

dear one were soon all dissipated; and even at this remote period we are permitted to think and speak of her as among the spirits of the just made perfect, and perhaps, in the tender mercy of God, as a ministering spirit to our own souls!

At about the period referred to, or rather for some weeks previously, an unusual interest had been awakened, by the faithful preaching of the gospel, upon those subjects connected with our unending existence in a future state. Religious meetings, of various descriptions, were held almost daily, and scarcely did an evening pass when some private dwelling or village school-house did not witness the gathering of persons of various ages, for earnest prayer to God for the outpouring of his Spirit. This

multiplication of the means of grace continued for a series of weeks, and in the course of that time many souls were awakened and convinced, and, as we had reason to believe, converted to God. Among others, was this young lady; and now that countenance, always so mild and gentle, was perfectly radiant with gratitude and hope and joy! Her eye seemed to be lighted up with a serene and heavenly lustre; her step became, if possible, more buoyant, and the tones of her sweet voice sweeter than ever. Once, joyous as her life was, it was at best but a very brief one. But now what a vail had been taken from the future! What precious supports for this world! What exalted, transporting blessedness in the next, and how unending!

I seldom saw her myself, and even less frequently had an opportunity of speaking to her of those interests which had now become so absorbing. But whenever I had such an opportunity, my heart was melted, indulging for her a tenderness hardly to be surpassed had she been my own first-born!

But, alas! a cloud was already gathering; and that scene, now so full of beauty and brightness, was soon, in some of its aspects, to be overshadowed by a gloom which not even religion itself could wholly dissipate.

Some little indisposition had rendered it necessary that she should avoid not only the evening air, but all exposure also during the day. It was hoped, however, that her health would soon be entirely restored; and hardly an appre-

hension was excited that her illness would prove a very serious one. But in the course of a few days, disease seemed to fasten itself upon her, and in such a form and with such power as not only to unfit her for the society of her friends, but to disqualify her also for those exercises of faith and love she had but just learned to enjoy. Soon her reason was manifestly impaired, and few or none of those who had been familiar with her progress in spiritual life were admitted to her bedside: and after a few days, perhaps weeks, of intense anxiety on the part of her parents and friends, *she fell asleep*—who that knew her could doubt it?—*in Jesus!*

I know not how to express the bitterness of my regret that owing to the severity of her sickness I was not able

to be with her for a single half-hour during the whole of it. At first, indeed, as I have before mentioned, no fatal result was at all anticipated; and when her symptoms became more alarming, it was deemed important that she should be kept, if possible, in a state of perfect quiet. I should have said, however, that I did see her, and see her often, during the last night of her life. But it was at a time when, lovely as she even then was, she recognised none of the friends around her; and our prayers at her bedside were heard only by Him whose ear is ever open to the cries of his children.

But many of the Christian friends of the dear child were earnestly asking, in her behalf, the presence and power of the Holy One who inhabiteth eternity.

It was the very evening, I think, before her death, that one of the more familiar religious gatherings of which I have spoken was held in the village church. Our pastor, who had watched with intense anxiety the first dawnings of pious feeling in the breast of this young disciple, was almost overwhelmed by the strength and tenderness of his emotions, in view of the event now apparently so near at hand. Oh, I shall never forget with what fervency and at what unusual length he poured out his soul before God! How importunately he asked that she might be spared, if consistent with God's will, to her friends and to the church of Christ; or, if she was to be taken away, prepared for his presence and kingdom! "Blessed Jesus!" he began, while the heart of every

one present was melting with something of his own tenderness of spirit, "Blessed Jesus! She whom thou lovest is sick!" proceeding, with a fullness and importunity I have never known equalled, to commend this lamb of the flock to the keeping and care and love of his and her own precious Master and Lord. It seemed, so full was his almost bursting heart, as if he knew not when or where to stop, or how to forbear the blessed privilege of imploring upon the head of this dear sufferer, one of the very dearest of his own spiritual children, every possible blessing for time and for eternity!

It was now evident that the final hour was approaching; and that I might be in a situation to render any assistance required, I had offered to sit up with the

family during the night. And what a night of anguish it was! Hitherto great care had been taken to keep the house as quiet as possible; but now nothing seemed to disturb the dear child. She noticed no one; and though at times restless, her state of unconsciousness remained unbroken to the last.

In passing from room to room, and occasionally looking in upon the sick one, I observed, toward morning, that in tossing from side to side, her cap having been loosened and thrown off, the rich brown locks of her hair had fallen about her face, giving to it, while her eyes were resting upon the ceiling, a wild and almost unearthly beauty. I endeavoured to catch one smile of recognition—one ray of intelligence—but in vain; and kneeling with her mother

at the foot of her bed, where, if reason should be restored but for a moment, we might be easily recognised, we once more commended her soul to the keeping of Him who never slumbers nor sleeps, earnestly entreating that it might be washed in that blood which cleanseth from all sin, and made meet for heaven.

About sunrise, her restlessness having for some time ceased, she quietly breathed out her spirit into the hands of Him who gave it!

“Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am.”

Active Benevolence.

THE question how we may best secure the highest present enjoyment, and most effectually prepare for the thousand trials and burdens God may have in store for us in his providence, is one which will often press with great weight upon the mind of every wise man. It matters little, in his view, what may be the degree of his happiness to-day, if, after all, that happiness is of such a nature, and derived from such sources, that to-morrow the slightest untoward occurrences may not only impair but destroy it. The only good, indeed, really worthy of any

great regard, and calling for our unceasing efforts for its attainment, is that which is in its own nature substantial and permanent; and just in proportion as we seek it with the whole heart, looking to God for his blessing, shall we experience the highest present happiness, and be prepared for the various scenes which await us here and hereafter.

One of the happiest men I have ever known was a man of the most active Christian benevolence—a benevolence so large and exalted that, while it rendered him prompt to relieve human suffering in all the various forms it is wont to assume, it awakened the most sedulous efforts to fix the attention of others upon those objects connected with their future and eternal well-being. Thus diligently labouring to make others happy, his own

spirit became increasingly vigorous and self-denying; while the Saviour, in whose service he had so earnestly engaged, stood by him in every emergency, imparting to him through life and in death that peace which passeth understanding.

The individual to whom I refer was a gentleman of about my own age, and had long been occupied in the usually engrossing pursuits of mercantile life. But while diligent in business, and successful in the acquisition of property, his heart was fixed upon those treasures which are enduring; and having himself tasted that the Lord is gracious, he had, to a very unusual degree, imbibed the spirit and learned to imitate the example of that Divine Master who, when on earth, went about doing good.

Though his health was generally fee-

ble, so much so, that most men, under the same circumstances, would have excused themselves from all extra effort on the ground of physical inability, his very infirmities seemed to give increased vigour to his labours of love.

The poor and needy were sought out, and their necessities relieved, if not from his own means, which were always freely bestowed, by the benevolence of others. Every nook and corner of the village in which he resided was carefully examined—not only that the hungry might be fed, and the naked clothed, but the reckless sinner warned, the inquiring impenitent one guided to Christ, and the wandering disciple reclaimed, and restored, and saved.

And while thus engaged as well in his own private business transactions, as in

efforts to supply the wants and provide for the spiritual necessities of others—labours which one would have supposed sufficient to occupy his whole time, and bring upon him burdens almost insupportable—not a meeting for prayer occurred, where his presence could under any circumstances have been expected, but he was there, and had laboured to bring others with him—his prayers and his efforts always evincing a fervency of spirit which was never weary, and never disheartened. Indeed, in every department of labour, at home and abroad, in his store, in the Sunday-school, in the distribution of tracts, in every missionary effort, in his visits to the sick and needy and suffering, in all his intercourse with the followers of Christ, or the impenitent world around him, his

one great, paramount object, year after year, sick or well, seemed ever to be "serving the Lord."

I knew him intimately and thoroughly, and during the whole course of my life I have never met with any human being, old or young, male or female, more sincerely and uniformly devoted to the service of Jesus Christ. His character, it is true, was not a perfect one. His importunities with the inconsiderate were sometimes perhaps too urgent, and often, it is possible, not entirely well-timed. Even his brethren in the church, as well as ministers of the gospel, were occasionally annoyed, no doubt, by his untiring activity and seeming restlessness of spirit, if they suffered any thing short of an insurmountable obstacle to induce an intermission of labour. But he was

always in the harness himself, and it seemed to be the desire of his heart that all around him should be striving together with him, and that continually, for the furtherance of the gospel of Christ. Indeed, his life was a standing admonition, not only to mere men of the world, who cared for none of these things, but to every disciple who was not habitually pressing toward the mark and helping others to obtain the prize. Oh! how often has my own languor been reproved by the fervency of his Christian love! And how often have I shrouded my heart and the worldliness of my spirit from his observation, lest his eye should detect and expose them! Alas! that we should ever practically forget that OMNISCIENT EYE, before which all things are naked and open.

But the period of my friend's active usefulness seemed to be drawing to a close, his health having so far failed that it appeared hardly possible he could to any considerable extent regain it. Still there was a childlike simplicity in his habitual confidence in God, which was inexpressibly interesting. Aside from his family, he was apparently unsolicitous whether he lived or died, and even with all his tenderness of affection for them, "Whatever," he would say, "be the will of the Lord, I am satisfied." Him he had long trusted, and him he delighted to trust still.

Unexpectedly, however, his disease assumed a more encouraging aspect, and it then became a question, both with him and his more intimate friends, whether he should remain where he was and sink,

as he probably must in the course of a few weeks, with his kindred and Christian associates around him, or seek to prolong life and some measure of usefulness by removing to a milder climate, and residing there permanently. After carefully looking at the subject in all its bearings, and with earnest prayer to God for direction, he finally concluded to adopt the course last mentioned; and as soon as the season of the year permitted, he took his departure, with a full conviction, on the part of the friends he was leaving, that we should see his face no more.

Having, after the experience of much weakness and many trials, accomplished the journey, he became an inhabitant of one of the more Southern states of the Union, and there remained for two or

three years, and until the time of his death. But feeble as he was, he was never idle. His life had been spared, and as he believed, for some wise purpose, and his constant inquiry continued to be, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

Surrounded by strangers, he endeavoured at once to ascertain, as well as he could, in what field of labour he could best expend the little measure of strength which was still left him. He found the inhabitants there solicitous chiefly, (as men are inclined to be everywhere else,) about the things of the present life, and caring little, and enjoying few facilities, for the advancement of their spiritual welfare. Under these circumstances he engaged anew, though to a very moderate extent, in his accustomed mer-

cantile pursuits, as well for the purpose of preserving, as far as might be, the small property he still enjoyed, as for the purpose also of furnishing to those around him a practical illustration of the entire consistency between diligence in the business of this life and habitual devotedness to the great interests of the life to come. At the same time, with a view to the attainment, if possible, of more immediate spiritual results, he established a depository for Bibles and tracts, and sought, by every possible means, to get them into general circulation. A Sunday-school was also set on foot, and efforts made to prepare the way for the settlement of a minister. When engaging in these enterprises, and various others, he never stopped to ask what he was able to do, his simple inquiry being,

What is needed? and what, with the blessing of God, am I bound to attempt? And there is reason to believe, that by his uniform integrity, active benevolence, and untiring industry, he not only secured the affection of his Christian acquaintance, but the respect also of those who took no interest in the subject of religion; and his efforts for the welfare of the community in which he lived will long be remembered with the most grateful emotions.

As he had anticipated, however, his work was destined to be a very brief one. His health ere long became again greatly impaired, and though he had considerable confidence himself that he should in some measure regain it, thinking that the Lord had still something for him to do, he desired nevertheless to indulge no

wish upon the subject, and was willing to live or die, as God saw best.

For a number of months he continued to become more and more feeble, uninterruptedly enjoying, however, an unusual measure of that peace which is promised to all those who stay their minds upon the Lord. And that habitual trust in God, which had uniformly yielded him so much enjoyment, he was careful to inculcate upon others. On one occasion, a little before his decease, when a lady who had recently lost her husband, called to see him, he said to her as she left him, "*You must lean upon the Lord,*" and after she had retired from his room, called her back, and said to her anew, "If you would have the Lord *sustain* you, you must *lean* upon him."

Although his sickness was so greatly

protracted, his patience and resignation and desire for usefulness never failed. At one time, when, in great agony, he had earnestly asked for relief, he immediately checked himself, adding, "If it be the Lord's will,—but not otherwise for worlds." And the very evening before his death, although unable to speak above a whisper, he talked earnestly for half an hour to a neighbouring clergyman, commending to his care a young lady of that clergyman's congregation, who had recently expressed a hope that she had become a Christian.

Some few days before his death, his wife being about to prepare a letter for a correspondent at the North, he wrote, while bolstered up in bed, the following farewell note to the circle of friends he

had, two or three years previously, left in New England:—

“BELOVED RELATIVES AND FRIENDS,

“These may be the last few lines you will ever receive from the well-known hand of one for whom you have watched and cared and prayed. My physician says this morning the probability is decidedly against me, though my case is not without hope. I *may* be raised, but this is very doubtful. God is love. He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and he in him. I trust we shall meet again, to part no more for ever. All I can say is, peace may you have as I have—I trust, such as Jesus promised.”

His toils and trials were now almost

over. Regarding heaven but as another apartment of his Father's house, he looked forward to the hour of death without the slightest apprehension; and though while any thing was left for him to do, he had seemed, like his Divine Master, to be straitened until it should be accomplished, yet now, his work was apparently all finished, and he sank gently away, falling asleep in Him who is the resurrection and the life.

Christian Consistency.

WHAT an indescribable charm does religion impart to the character of woman! Without it, though she may possess the finest intellectual powers, and the most exquisite symmetry of feature and person, there is a deficiency, especially in the higher and more endearing relations of life, which nothing else can supply. Beauty and grace and gentleness may awaken, as they often do, even a fond admiration: but nothing short of that excellence, of which religion is an indispensable element, can secure perma-

nently our profoundest confidence and love.

Of all my female acquaintance, I have never known any one more uniformly or universally attractive, in youth, and middle life, and down to the period of old age, than a lady who has recently deceased.

She was a child of respectable and pious parents, and had been carefully instructed in the Scriptures, and taught to regard the present life as but the mere threshold of the life to come. The lessons thus inculcated had made a deep and abiding impression upon her mind, and under its influence a wonderful sweetness was thrown over her character, giving to it, in the view of all classes of her acquaintance, an attractiveness very rarely surpassed. The religious element

of which I speak had been so thoroughly wrought into her nature that it seemed to impart a loveliness to her habitual deportment in every relation of life. It beamed in her large, soft, benevolent eye, gave sweetness to the tones of her voice, and above all, awakened an unceasing solicitude for the present and permanent welfare, not only of her own family, but of every individual, high or low, within the limits of her acquaintance.

She was married in early life, and at a period probably when she was not herself indulging a hope that she had become a follower of Christ. Her husband was a man of excellent mind, and of a noble and most benevolent spirit. But though, in point of tenderness for others, hardly surpassed by the wife God had

given him, he was not a Christian; and from year to year, as her own hopes brightened, and her estimate of the indescribable value of the gospel became more and more just, it seemed to be her unceasing desire and prayer that he might be made sensible of the necessities and perils of his condition. And, blessed be God, her efforts and prayers were not unavailing. When far advanced in years, he yielded to the combined influences of her sweet Christian example and of the Spirit of God, and embraced, with the docility of a child, the truth as it is in Jesus. Oh! what were her songs of thanksgiving in view of this precious manifestation of the Divine favour! How earnestly and long she had sought it! and what a source of inexpressible joy to her loving spirit, that he

also, after all her anxieties and fears, had been brought into the fold of the Good Shepherd!

In the tender relation of mother, she was every thing the fondest child could desire. With what solicitude she watched over her children in early life! How importunately she entreated in their behalf, as one after another they went out into the world, the guidance and blessing of God; and with what unwearyed assiduity afterward did she improve every opportunity of advancing their temporal and spiritual welfare!

But her heart, though full of the tenderest solicitude for the circle of loved ones more immediately around her, was warm also with the truest benevolence toward others. Her neighbours and acquaintance, whether the professed dis-

principles of Christ, or still ranged on the side of his enemies, were ever awakening, in some form or other, her efforts in their behalf. For the old, she had always a word of the kindest sympathy and respect—for those occupying the busy scenes of middle life, one of affectionate caution against the engrossing concerns of the world—and for the young, of entreaty that they would remember Him who alone could be effectually the guide of their youth.

Her early education and the sphere of life in which she moved had given her an unusual taste for literature, and an unusual capacity for judging of its productions, while her letters and conversation evinced a refinement and cultivation of mind and sweetness of disposition singularly interesting. Her love indeed

for the beautiful, whether in the natural or moral world, was one of the most striking traits in her character, and one could hardly observe the delight with which she contemplated the traces of her Father's hand in the pencillings of a flower, or the luxuriance of the scenery of her native village, or in the childlike loveliness of an humble, gentle, self-denying disciple of Christ, without catching something of the enthusiasm which swelled and animated her own breast.

But notwithstanding her unusual taste for literary pursuits, the Bible was after all her great repository of truth, and to this fountain she repaired habitually, that her thirst might be sweetly and permanently assuaged. With what delight she drank of its waters! and what a glow of spiritual health pervaded her

countenance, when, after a season of devout meditation and prayer, she engaged anew in the active duties of life!

Prone as the disciples of Christ are to forget their obligations and privileges, how beautiful is that consistency of Christian character which manifests itself at all times and under all circumstances, and which, while opening to the believer himself sources of unceasing enjoyment, does more, perhaps, than any thing else, to impress upon the minds of others a conviction of the absolutely transforming power of the gospel of Christ!

And it was this which gave to the character of our deceased friend one of its highest charms. No matter where she was, whether at home or abroad, surrounded by Christian friends, or by the

inconsiderate and thoughtless, she seemed always to be under the same blessed influence from above.

Aware that her solicitude and efforts for the welfare of others would be utterly unavailing without the blessing of God, she loved not only the place of secret prayer, but those gatherings of the disciples of Christ, where, in conjunction with others, she might plead with God for the outpourings of his Spirit and the extension of his kingdom. But his sanctuary was peculiarly dear to her, and it was the habitual language of her heart, "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord." With what delight she waited upon Him there! With what humility and fervency of spirit she united in the devotions of his people! With what a deep, ten-

der, absorbing interest she drank in the truth, as it was there dispensed by those commissioned to minister in his name!

Such were some of the more prominent characteristics, for a long succession of years, of this lovely and excellent woman. She had in early life been impressed by the power of Divine truth; in her more mature years she had consecrated herself to Christ; and down to old age had his blessed assurances been verified to her soul—"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." "Not as the world giveth, give I unto you."

At different periods, some years before her death, she was reduced to such an extremity of weakness that it seemed hardly possible she could be restored. But under these, and all her various

trials, she had learned to cast her burdens upon the Lord, and he had sustained her. Her "bank of faith" was never exhausted. She had partaken of that living water of which Christ has said, "Whosoever drinketh of it shall never thirst, but it shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

But the days of the years of her pilgrimage were about to be finished. The infirmities of age were multiplying; her hearing, which had been for years imperfect, had almost failed, and her voice, too, at times, had become so feeble that it was with great difficulty she could be understood by those around her. Nevertheless, her confidence in God remained unshaken. In the language of one who

was with her to the last, "There were occasionally apparent wanderings of the mind, and minglings of the present with the past, that seemed like a return to childhood. But the mists and clouds that veiled and sometimes utterly shut out the sun soon passed away, and showed us that the luminary in her breast was never to be extinguished, though it might go down and leave us in darkness."

"For a day or two previous to the last, her sufferings were often very severe, but for the few hours immediately preceding her death, her spirit was as peaceful as the gentlest sleep of an infant upon its mother's bosom."

And when she finally died, not a doubt rested upon the minds of the

friends who survived her, that she had joined the great company of the redeemed above, whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Candid Inquirer.

SOME years ago, having learned through a mutual friend that the son of a lady of my acquaintance, in the very prime of life, was gradually sinking under some pulmonary affection, and in a disturbed state of mind on the subject of his spiritual concerns, I intimated a disposition, should his mother think it desirable, to visit him.

From what I had learned, I supposed him to be about eighteen or twenty years old; and, though reared in a religious family, more insensible, perhaps, than usual to the importance of

securing an interest in Christ. At any rate, when I first heard of his case, I was led, without much reflection, though prompted I trust by a sincere desire to make myself useful, to throw out the intimation I did. Somewhat to my surprise, I was informed by my correspondent, a day or two after, that not only his mother but the son also would be exceedingly happy to see me.

Under these circumstances, with as brief a preparation as might be, I undertook the journey. When once upon my way, however, and the excitement under which I commenced it had somewhat subsided, I thought much and often of the nature of the errand upon which I was going; of the inexpressibly important results depending, perhaps, upon the faithful performance of my

duty; and of my utter insufficiency for that duty, in every stage of it, without the divine blessing. Indeed, so distinctly was my unfitness for such a service impressed upon my mind, that it required the most constant reflection upon the value of the interests at stake, accompanied by earnest prayer to God for the aids of his Spirit, to enable me, with any degree of personal satisfaction, to persevere in my purpose.

It was late in the day when I reached the village in which my young friend resided; and after as little delay as was consistent with making the family acquainted with my arrival, and becoming myself informed of their wishes respecting my visit, I called upon them. When I reached the house, the mother being engaged by her attendance on

the son, her sisters met me, and gave me a most cordial welcome. It soon became apparent from their conversation, that the case of the young man was regarded as somewhat less critical than it had been, and that his mind was in a less disturbed state than I had supposed it might be. To my great surprise, too, I now learned, for the first time, that instead of being a mere youth, he was a man of some six or eight and twenty years of age, who had been for years and was at that time a member of the legal profession.

After being informed very briefly of his previous course of life, and of the difficulties he had met in relation to his spiritual interests, I was introduced into his room. He received me in the most kind and cordial manner, expressed his gratitude that

I had taken so much pains in his behalf, and prepared me, by the sweetness of his own spirit, to engage in the service which had called me there, with the most encouraging hopes of success. Though much emaciated, his dark, intelligent eye, and the very tones of his voice, indicated an unexpected degree of physical strength; while every word he uttered convinced me that, with all his apparent gentleness of nature, his mind was one of singular activity and acuteness.

For a few minutes after his mother withdrew, our conversation was confined to the weather, the circumstances of my journey, the state of his health, and our mutual pleasure in meeting, though under circumstances so much to be regretted. By-and-by, however, reference

was made to the letters which had passed between my correspondent and myself, and the magnitude of the interest which had so unexpectedly brought me to his bedside. Nothing in the slightest degree repulsive was observable in his language or deportment. With all the frankness of a man of the kindest and most noble nature, he said, to me, not in words, but by his whole demeanour—“*You have come to me on an errand of mercy; God grant it may be followed by results gladdening alike to your heart and mine!*”

Thus prepared, we entered upon a discussion of those subjects upon which his happiness for time and for eternity seemed to be suspended. He had no doubt that the Scriptures are the word of God. His difficulties were of another

sort, having reference rather to his need of salvation, and to the process to be gone through as preparatory to securing it, than to the sufficiency of the scriptural provision in the case of open and flagrant transgressors of God's law. In other words, having maintained, as he supposed, all his life, a correct moral deportment, he seemed at a loss to understand the necessity, or possibility even, of such a profound sense of guilt as the gospel enjoins, or what was exactly intended by that radical change of heart without which we are assured we cannot see the kingdom of God. Not that his difficulties were stated just in this form, or were confined entirely to these points. So far as I can now remember, however, these were the more prominent ones; and whether more or

less numerous, they might be all traced to one source—a very imperfect apprehension of his own ill deserts, and consequent exposedness to the divine displeasure.

Our conversation upon these subjects having been continued for a considerable time, for the purpose of exhibiting to him connectedly, and in the simplest form, my own views of the gospel scheme of salvation, I spoke to him very freely of his relations to God; of his indebtedness to him for the thousand blessings he had enjoyed; of his obligations, growing out of those relations, to love, obey, and honour him; of his long-continued ingratitude, disregard of His authority, and disobedience of his commands; of his consequent guilt in God's sight, and his exposure, of

course, to the penalties of his law ; and, finally, though in a similar case, under the administration of human laws, the offender would be without remedy, of the provision God had made, through the mediation of his own Son, for the pardon of the sinner, and for his preparation, under the influences of the Spirit, for his presence and kingdom ; endeavouring, as I went along, to secure his assent to the correctness of the different steps I was taking.

Thus far, theoretically at least, there seemed to be no special difficulty in his way.

Without allowing myself, however, to occupy much time, and contenting myself for the present with preparing the way for future interviews, I spoke to him of the gentleman whose case is men-

tioned in a previous sketch entitled "Glimmer of Hope;" of the importance of his coming to the Scriptures himself with a childlike docility of spirit; and again and again, of his utter inability to accomplish any thing, to any good purpose, without imploring and obtaining the aids of the Spirit.

But perceiving him to be fatigued, I omitted reading to him, as I had intended, a portion of Scripture; and having offered, while kneeling at his bedside, a short prayer in his behalf, I withdrew, promising, at his request, to call again the next morning.

In the mean time my own mind was exceedingly tried by the peculiarity of the circumstances in which I so unexpectedly found myself. With a presumption hardly excusable, and without

any pretensions to the important place I was occupying, I had assumed a position from which I could not withdraw, and one which nevertheless, depending upon my own strength alone, I was utterly incompetent to hold. But the truths I had been commending to the attention of my friend were adequate, if cordially embraced and acted on, to my own relief; and I know not when I have been more sensible of my need of strength from above.

Though the interview I had already had with my sick friend had convinced me, more than ever, of my own incompetency for the service I had assumed, I could not but continue to ask in his behalf the blessing of God, and even, if it was possible, that I might be made the instrument of guiding him into the

way of life; while it was the more constant burden of my prayers that I might be spared the calamity of perplexing his mind, and thus inflicting, perhaps, an irreparable mischief.

I called on him, as I had promised to do, the next morning, and to my regret found him sitting up, and under circumstances, I feared, therefore, hardly so well fitted as the day before to admit of an extended interview. He spoke, too, with apparently less ease, and, as it seemed to me—perhaps I was mistaken—somewhat less confidingly; and yet his deportment toward me was kind and courteous.

It being desirable that his attention should be particularly drawn to the essential characteristics of a disciple of Christ, I endeavoured to explain to him,

as well as I could, the nature of true repentance, with the deep sense of sin and the full purpose of future obedience implied by it; the indispensable necessity of faith, or a cordial receiving of Christ, and resting upon him as the only ground of the sinner's hope of salvation; with his perishing need, as the source of every grace in the Christian character, of the transforming and sanctifying influences of the Spirit of God, without which, depraved as he was, he could not be fitted, even were his sins pardoned, for the immaculate blessedness of heaven.

Without attempting to controvert, or appearing even to question the correctness of the views I had suggested, he still seemed to be somewhat perplexed by various matters of minor importance

—such as the instantaneous nature of regeneration, the supposed necessary consciousness of the sinner, when created anew in Christ, that he has become one of his disciples, &c.

In relation to the first, I told him, substantially, that though in one sense conversion must be instantaneous, since every man must be impenitent or in a state of grace, and the identical moment when he passes the dividing line he becomes a Christian, yet the evidences of one's conversion were very various—sometimes very faint, and sometimes absolutely conclusive—and generally, perhaps, especially in the case of those religiously educated, like the dawning of the day, the light at first being indistinct, then gradually disclosing objects in their true form and colouring, and

finally pouring upon the world around us a full tide of effulgence.

And then, again, as to the confidence one feels that he is a Christian, much may depend upon his natural temperament, his early education and previous habits of life, the circumstances under which his conversion occurred, and his subsequent course of action,—especially in reference to the spiritual welfare of others. And even if he sincerely repented of his sins, and with a childlike confidence in Christ committed his all into his hands, for time and for eternity, however thorough his change of character, God might or he might not see fit to grant him an unwavering conviction that his hope was a good hope, and would never fail him. But however this might be, and whether he possessed or

was destitute of the faith of assurance, the believer is always safe in clinging to Christ, and safe nowhere else.

He said but little, but as he seemed to understand perfectly what was required to secure salvation, and, though without that deep sense of guilt which is often observable, to be earnestly desiring that his sins might be blotted out and his soul transformed and sanctified, I could not but hope that he was just prepared, if he had not already done it, to give up all for Christ.

When I left him, I proposed seeing him again in the course of the day.

Accordingly, in the afternoon, near night, I called a third time, and was grieved to find that he had been up and dressed for an hour or two, and had become weary in waiting for me. Hav-

ing expressed my regret that there should have been any misapprehension on his part as to the time of my calling, and perceiving that he was even less able than in the morning to engage in conversation, I determined to try his strength as little as possible; and after a brief interview, in which the same topics were discussed or adverted to as before, and once more commending him in prayer to the guidance of the Spirit of God, I took my leave of him, and, as it proved, for the last time.

From the appearance of our friend when I first met him, I thought his life might be prolonged for months; but his apparent strength, at that time, was no doubt the result of a momentary excitement. After our last interview his decline was very rapid. He lived only

two or three weeks, continuing for the most part to manifest great reserve in reference to his religious feelings; and yet, by the trembling hopes he occasionally expressed, and the uniformly subdued and patient and gentle spirit he continued to exhibit, awakening a grateful conviction, in the minds of all around him, that he died a penitent believer in Christ.

Perfect Peace.

AMONG the various persons I have seen upon their death-bed, I do not remember any one who illustrated more clearly the benignant and tranquillizing influence of religion than the subject of this article,—a lady who was exceedingly dear to me, and for whose memory I shall always cherish the fondest regard.

She was the daughter of a clergyman of New England, and at an early period became deeply and permanently interested in that subject—of all others the most important to a rational and im-

mortal being—the necessity of preparation for an endless hereafter. I am not aware of the circumstances under which the radical change of character she experienced occurred. Such, however, were her views of the gospel scheme of salvation, and so cordial, apparently, was her acceptance of its offers of mercy, that she was soon induced to make a profession of her faith in Christ, and to become a member of the church of which her father was the pastor.

Soon after his death, and when about nineteen years of age, she became the wife of a gentleman considerably older than herself, who was then beginning to evince a remarkable fitness for the high standing in professional and public life which he subsequently attained; and while possessing, as she did, an excellent

mind and remarkable sweetness of disposition, she seemed, by her uniform reverence for him, and her unceasing efforts for his happiness, to have imbibed an unusual measure of that spirit so earnestly inculcated by the great apostle to the Gentiles.

As a wife and mother, and indeed in every relation she sustained, she appears to have made very early and rapid advances in Christian character; and that character was obviously maturing, from year to year, under the discipline of various sorts which she was called to experience. Her own health was exceedingly delicate, and many of her large family of children were called away before her. But whether in prosperity or adversity—whether cheered by the high degree of regard her husband seemed to be

securing in the community, or watching with the tenderest solicitude about the bedside of a sick child, or mourning over the loss of the dear ones who had been suddenly taken from her—she always manifested a spirit so equable, subdued, and gentle, that it was plain that her chief treasure was not on earth, but in heaven.

And yet, strange as it may seem, while tremblingly alive to the importance of a good hope through grace, and uniformly regarding Jesus Christ as all her salvation and all her desire, such was her estimate of the importance of that great change which awaits us, and of its tremendous results, that she could never speak of her own death but with the deepest emotion! The very mention of it would bring tears to her eyes and fill her heart with anxiety. In-

deed, notwithstanding her high Christian attainments, and the unwavering confidence of her friends in the integrity of her Christian character, she was one of "those who through fear of death are all their lifetime subject to bondage."

But, blessed be God, her sweet, child-like, loving spirit was not destined to be always thus darkened and burdened. When but little advanced beyond the period of middle life, she exhibited symptoms of pulmonary consumption, brought about, it may be, by her attendance upon a very dear son of mature age, who some few years before had fallen a victim to that disease. And these indications were, alas! but too well founded. For two or three years she lingered along, sometimes awakening hopes that she would throw off the disease entirely, and

then again experiencing a degree of prostration which threatened a speedy extinction of life. Thus she continued, oscillating between life and death, until it became apparent that there was no hope of her recovery; and after many months of extreme debility, though never of very severe suffering, she surrendered her spirit into the hands of Him who gave it.

But what was remarkable—and it is to this fact that I am desirous to draw the attention of the reader—as the sun of her life declined, the clouds which had obscured its brightness were gradually scattered, until the hour of its setting arrived, when no Italian sky could have been softer or more cloudless and beautiful.

For some time it had become more and

more apparent that the days of this precious friend would be soon numbered and finished, and indeed we were in hourly expectation that the token of her being sent for would be received. Having once more privately commended her to Him who neither slumbers nor sleeps, I had retired to rest, but, soon after midnight, was aroused by information that a sudden change had come over her, and she was apparently dying. I hurried to her bedside, when, instead of meeting this dear, dying one, with a look, as I had feared, of deep solicitude, perhaps of anguish, depicted upon her countenance, I found her quiet, peaceful, and to all appearance, as serenely happy as could be desired. Kneeling down by her side, I told her, while I held her emaciated hand in mine, that I was rejoiced to find her

so tranquil, and that she had a Shepherd so full of kindness and power and love. She replied that the state of her mind was a subject of amazement to herself. Though death was so near at hand, she had not a single fear to trouble her; and she had no doubt that He who had so long sustained her would sustain her to the end. Soon the other members of the family began to assemble to take a farewell look of one who had so long been the favourite of each.

Acquainted with her usual state of mind, all were amazed by the wonderful composure and tranquillity and even cheerfulness our dear friend exhibited, and this when manifestly on the very verge of the grave, her destinies about to be settled for eternity. Oh! it was a subject of the profoundest gratitude

to us all—it was the burden of our conversation, and even of our prayers, which had become, from the singularity of our circumstances, rather songs of praise than addresses of supplication.

But the night had now wasted away; the day had dawned, the sun had risen—the emblem of that Sun of Righteousness which for hours, I trust, had been beaming upon our souls—and the same group of dear ones still surrounded the bed of the dying believer. Angels and ministering spirits (among them, it may be, the dear ones she had loved and lost) were also there, waiting and watching for the further developments of the love and mercy of their God and ours. And the same benignant and placid smile continued to rest upon the countenance of this precious disciple of Jesus. Not a

single pain seemed to disturb her serenity; and but for an occasional wish to be shifted in her position, not an indication was exhibited of the slightest disquietude of body or mind.

As the morning advanced, and one after another had stolen away to the breakfast-table, and all had re-assembled in what seemed to have become one of the outer courts of the upper sanctuary, and we were again speaking of that love of God which passeth knowledge, our dear friend, resting in the arms of a younger female relative—now, I trust, also in heaven—began to speak anew, in broken accents, of her own unworthiness, and of the wonderful love of Christ—attempting to express her amazement, that what she had always anticipated as a scene of anguish was one of such unutterable

peace. "Oh, it is only," said her husband, "that Jesus Christ loves you, and is now sustaining and comforting you. You have long loved him, my child, you have loved him all your life, you loved him,"—he said in a tone of inexpressible tenderness,—"*you loved him, Sally, when you were a little girl.*"

But soon the eyes of our dear one were beginning to assume an unnatural appearance, and it was evident that her sight had failed. Her voice too became more and more feeble, till it was entirely gone. Her pulse was fluttering. Her breathing, though still easy, grew shorter and shorter. The golden bowl was just ready to be broken—when she reached out her hand, as though desiring some one to take it. One child after another did so—but no, it was not the hand she

wanted—when her husband, thinking she might wish from him one more assurance of his love, gently pressed it, and she was satisfied. It was the hand of one, who had been to her, for many years, a husband, father, unfaltering friend. She had clung to it through life, and now, though Christ had become to her the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely, she was manifesting her love and gratitude to Him, by clinging to it still.

Extract of a Letter,

FROM A CLERGYMAN TO A LADY, ONCE A
MEMBER OF HIS CHURCH, AND SUPPOSED TO
BE NEAR DEATH.

* * * “THE Scriptures represent death as a very solemn event, and the feelings of nature agree with the representations of the Scriptures. But there is a remarkable diversity among men, among Christians, in the views and feelings with which it is regarded—a diversity not perhaps to be accounted for. The dread which torments some, never affects the hearts of others; and we cannot find in faith or holiness the reason for the difference. People are not free from the

fear of death in proportion to their readiness for it. People are not overwhelmed with the fear of it in proportion to their real grounds for fearing.

“ I have no doubt that so far as the fear of death arises from what lies beyond it in eternity, the fear will vanish according to the soul’s confiding in God, or its expectation of future felicity. Grace certainly *tends* to pacify conscience, and remove the terrors which sin hangs around the throne of judgment. But grace has only an *indirect* tendency to make *dying itself* less dreadful. It says (to every believer) of the judgment-seat, *there is no condemnation*; but it does not say, there are no last gasps, no expiring groans, no shadows or darkness in the valley to be trodden. It has fought for us the battle, and opened up the way

for us to stand before God in peace, so that we have no battle to fight, but have only to stand, without arms and without action, by the side of Him whose bared head receives the strokes of infinite justice. But it has *not* made a path *around* the death-bed, and vouchsafed to us the chariot and horses of fire. So that our religion diminishes the terrors of death itself, only—1st. By promising support and victory in that hour; and 2d. By leading the soul to look over and beyond and above the conflict, and to long to be away, on the wings of angels, to the hallelujahs of the city of God. This last is the most common exercise of believers, who die in triumph. They forget dying. They melt away into heaven.

“If then you would be prepared for *both kinds* of the fear, and have the full

victory over them, anticipate heaven, love heaven, live heaven. Learn to sing—

Jerusalem ! my happy home,
Name ever dear to me ;
When shall my labours have an end,
In joy, and peace, and thee !

Learn to think of the redeeming work of the eternal Son of God, and sing—

For thee, my soul, for thee.

The more simple and childlike you make all your exercises of mind, the better. Trust—do nothing but trust. Never try to do any thing else. You will find love coming unbidden and sweetly into your heart, if you will just TRUST Jesus Christ. As a guilty, poor, helpless, undone sinner, lie in his arms, and *be still*. *Don't*

ask him what he is going to do with you. If your village were attacked at midnight by a savage foe, burning its dwellings, and butchering its inhabitants, and a mother should take her child in her bosom to flee, and draw a hasty covering around its head, and whisper, ‘Hush, hush, mother has got you,’ it would be unwise (may I not say *unkind*) if that cherished child should say, ‘Mother, mother, what are you going to do with me?’ She will do *the best she can*; and so *will Jesus Christ with you*, if you will trust him. Let him have his own way; let him carry you as he will; be the child in his arms, to do nothing but cling to him.” * * *

THE END.

will then what he is going to do with you
 If your village were attacked at night
 right by a savage foe, burning its dwell-
 ings and plundering its inhabitants, and
 a mother should take her child in her
 arms to flee and find a heavy covering
 around its head, and whisper, "Hush,
 hush, mother has got you," it would be
 useless (may I not say useless) if the
 cherished child should say, "Mother,
 mother, what are you going to do with
 me?" She will do the best she can; and
 if she will take care with you, if you will
 trust her, she will have her own way;
 let him carry you as he will; be the child
 in his arms, to do nothing but cling to
 him, and he will have his own way.
 The mother will have her own way,
 and the child will have his own way.



Nancy
Hanks
Lincoln
Public
Library