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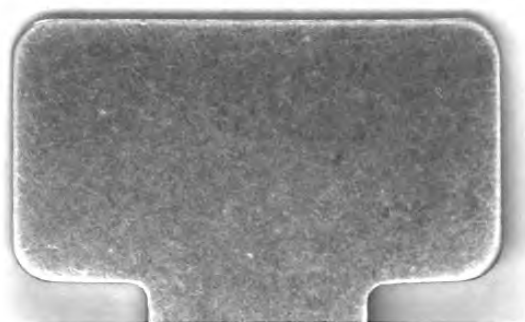
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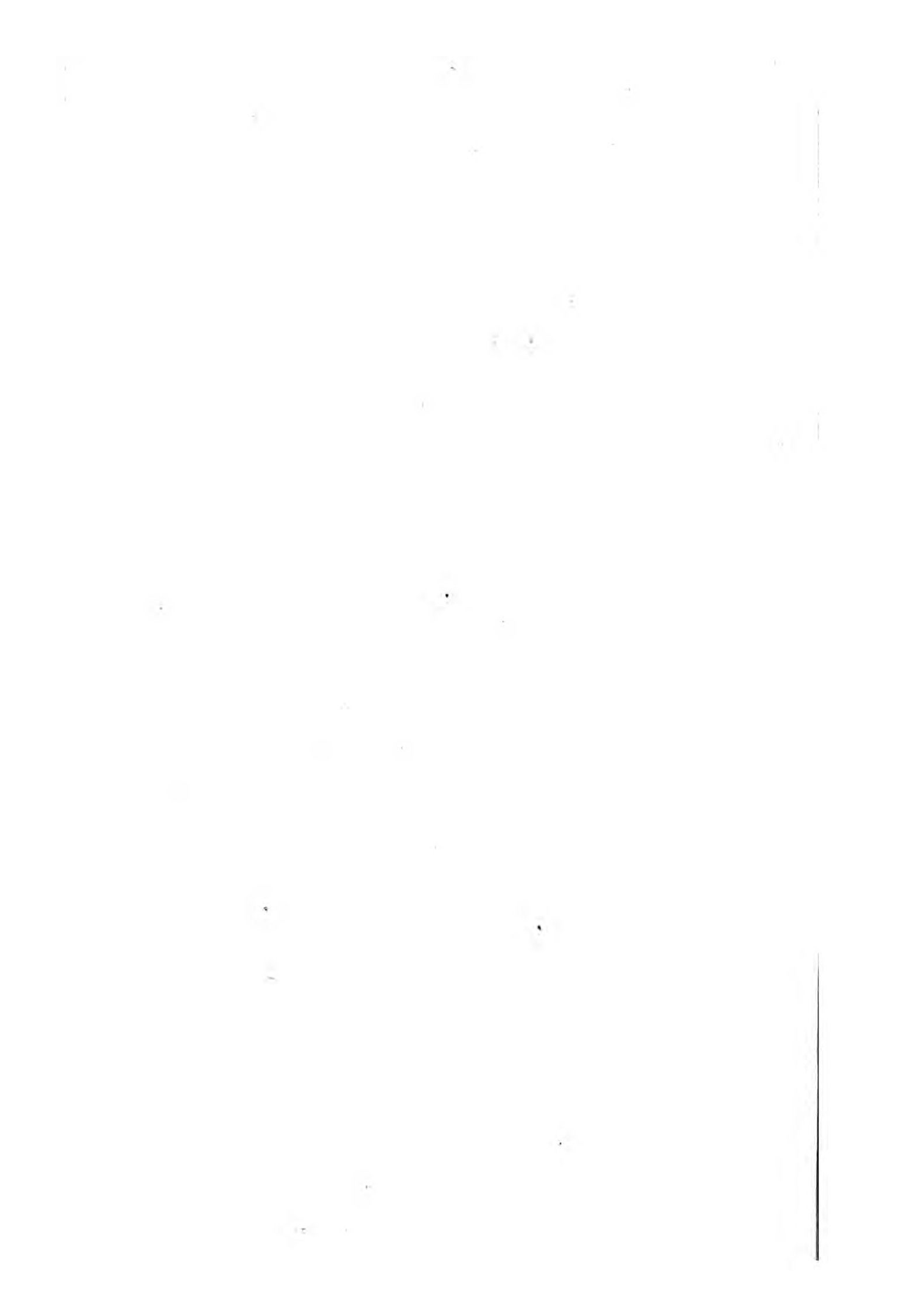
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"SEEKING
AFTER PEACE."





“SEEKING AFTER PEACE.”

A BOOK FOR

ENQUIRERS ON TRUE RELIGION.

BY

M. M.

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INDEX.

CHAP.	PAGE
Preface	3
I. Of what does Religion consist ?	7
II. God's Love to His People	15
III. Hindrances to Religion	22
IV. The Christian's Conflicts	29
V. What are the Requirements of Religion	38
VI. Who may be Saved ?	47
VII. For the Young	55
VIII. To the Middle-aged	62
IX. To the Aged	69
X. To the Careless	76
XI. To the Weak and Undecided	82
XII. The End of the World	88
XIII. The Judgment	95
XIV. The Christian's Welcome	101
XV. The Sinner's Doom	107

PREFACE.

THERE are but few who will read this little book, who have not (at some time or another of their lives) asked themselves that most solemn and important question, "What must I do to be saved?"

The young and thoughtless ask it when, their conscience once fully aroused, they think of the eternity of that which is to come, and of the unspeakable difference between heaven and hell.

The awakened sinner's first thought is, "What must I do to be saved?" "How can I flee from the wrath to come?" While confirmed sinners, though they ask it not in penitence, yet feel a fearful shrinking and trembling when forebodings seize their mind, of the fate of the unsaved.

There is but one answer to the question ; the same that was given hundreds of years ago to the Philippian gaoler, and that is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Believe that our Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Believe that our Lord Jesus Christ laid His glory aside, and came down from heaven, and lived a life of trials, and died a painful death, on purpose to save lost man. Believe this and meditate upon it, and thou cannot help loving Him, who has done so much for you. "Believe this, and thou shalt be saved."

When we hear of any one who has rescued another from destruction at the peril of their own life, it cannot fail to touch our hearts. There is gratitude yet in the human breast for unexpected and undeserved kindness. Then how can we for a moment forget Him who has been our greatest deliverer ; "Him" through whom alone we can obtain pardon for our past sins, and strength to overcome sin for the future.

"We love Him, because he first loved us." But we cannot love Him until we know Him ; and we cannot know Him until we believe in Him.

It is written in the tenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, at the thirteenth and fourteenth verses,—“Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? and how then shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?”

But now in these days of spiritual enlightenment surely there are none who have not heard of Christ? Religion and religious excitement are every-day topics of conversation—surely, there are none ignorant of the requirements of Religion?

Readers, the Pharisees talked of Religion, used forms of Religion, yet they knew not the spirit of Religion; they found not favour with God.

All that is required from any of us is plainly revealed to us in the Bible—all may read it there; yet perchance this little book may be a *help* to some, even as I have found others' thoughts great helps to myself.

Those who have come to God—who have tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious, “*may*” find here some word of encouragement to cheer them on their way. Those who are halting between two opinions may

see the difference between those who love God, and those who love Him not; so that they may the more readily accept the better portion.

While wilful sinners may herein read their everlasting doom, if they turn not from their evil way and live; and being warned may repent, and seek forgiveness ere it be too late, and the door of mercy be shut against them for ever.

HELP TO ENQUIRERS.

CHAPTER I.

OF WHAT DOES RELIGION CONSIST?

TRUE religion consists in a right knowledge of God, and in walking according to that knowledge.

First, we must have a right knowledge of God. We must consider in what relation we stand to Him, as *His* creatures—the work of *His* hands; and also in what relation He stands to us, as our Creator, Ruler, and Almighty Protector.

We must go back to the commencement of the world. To “the beginning” when “God created the heaven and the earth,” and when the earth by the power of God was brought into a fit and beautiful abode for man—God, who formed the earth to be inhabited, said, “Let us make man in our

image, after our likeness.” “So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him,” (Gen. i. 26, 27.) “and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” (Gen. ii. 7.) Thus we learn our high and holy descent. Man was created to show forth the power and glory of God: a new creation which should receive their happiness from God their Maker, and return perfect obedience to all His commands, as to a higher and supreme power, acknowledging that it is in Him “we live and move, and have our being.”

If we try to picture to ourselves the great blight of sin removed away, we may be enabled faintly to perceive, the great happiness, which God our Maker had intended for us. For there would then have been no poverty which now crushes so many. The earth would have brought forth sufficient for all without that laborious and heart-sickening toil under which so many now pine. There would have been no sickness; so that the body would have been fitter to bear exertion then, than now, in its much more enfeebled state. There would have been no peevish, cross, and trying tempers to yield to and bear with:

for do not these shew themselves mostly as the result of misfortune or affliction? But nothing that causes sorrow would have entered into Paradise had man remained true to the first position in which he was placed.

We all know, and have read, how that Satan, jealous of the new creation which enjoyed those blessings—from which him and his followers were cast out, strove to accomplish their ruin, by tempting them to disobey God. They hearkened, and fell. And now their happiness has fled. The man by the sweat of the brow must earn his bread. The woman endure much pain and suffering. No longer might Adam and Eve hear the voice of the Lord God, walking in the midst of the Garden of Eden; no longer mingle with the bright and beautiful angels, singing praises to God. They had sinned, and they felt how guilty they had been. They were afraid, and hid themselves.

But though we are changed since the fall, God our Maker is not changed. God is just the same now as He was then—perfect in might, majesty, and purity, viewing the earth and its millions of inhabitants, upholding them in the hour of

their trial, giving victory to those who put their trust in Him, and granting to the rebellious a further space for repentance. "I am the Lord, I change not."

Neither did he forsake mankind. They had sinned and they must take the consequences of sin, for God hates sin. They were no longer fit to be in that holy and happy Paradise. They were driven out. But yet a means was found by which they could obtain pardon. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John iii. 16.) And in due time Christ was born, who, by fulfilling, once for all, the law of God, "should magnify it, and make it honourable." And by one perfect offering made for sin should "perfect for ever them that are sanctified."

And now man is without excuse. God is willing and ready to forgive. Christ has obtained pardon for all who will accept it. The Holy Spirit is promised to those who seek His gracious aid, and man can again inherit those blessings which he had forfeited, yea, greater blessings; for now, those whose sins are washed away and pardoned, "who sleep in Jesus," will awake

free from the bondage of corruption. Temptation can never more assault their souls; they are then above the reach of harm; their "spirits were willing" on earth to serve their Maker, though "their flesh was weak." But then their spirits will be unfettered by the flesh, purified, sanctified and glorified, and can never more be parted from the Saviour they have loved.

Then seeing there is such a glorious hereafter in store for the faithful people of God, let us strive to walk worthy of the same, not forgetting the *great privilege* it is to belong to God's family, (to be admitted as one of His children,) a privilege which cannot be prized too much: "We bless Thee for our creation" is the true believer's prayer. And those who despise their birthright, or sell it, as Esau, for this world's gain, know not the inestimable value of that which they so easily part with. For does not God allow His people to call Him Father and Friend? Has He not promised to be their helper and deliverer in all their troubles? To keep those that put their trust in Him through life; and take them to glory when they die?

Hear His tender words to those who

will listen to them, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in Me is thine help." (Hosea xiii. 9.) "Wilt thou not from *this time* cry unto me, My Father, Thou art the guide of my youth?" (Jer. iii. 4.)

God pleads with His people. Then turn not a deaf ear to His entreaties. Let none feed upon husks when bread is offered to them.

There may be some that think, had they been placed in our forefathers' positions they would not have fallen as they did. But God is the same still, He is unchangeable; and were it possible, (which we know it is not,) for any one to live a truly holy life, without sin in thought, word, or deed, God could preserve that one from the evils which necessarily fall upon all, as the consequences of sin. See Enoch, who walked with God, "And he was not, for God took him." And Elijah, who was taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire. Daniel, who was protected in the den of lions. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who were preserved in the fiery furnace. Besides thousands of others, who though allowed to suffer affliction, have been gloriously supported under it, "enduring as seeing Him who is invisible." And

think not these were more favoured than others, but that they were holier than others. It is those who overcome sin the most, who live the nearest to God; and those who honour God the most, by their consistent conduct, God Himself will honour.

But, alas, how few live up to their privileges as children, "Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ!" How little of that wrestling and prevailing by prayer, like Jacob's—"I will not let thee go except Thou bless me!" Where is the proving the Lord, by our ready obedience to His commands, that He might "pour out such a blessing upon us, that there would not be room enough to receive it." (Mal. iii. 10.) How little of that faith which makes "all things" possible to him that believeth! How little of that hungering and thirsting after God, that intense longing for Him! Yet it is to such He delighteth to reveal Himself—"And blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

Though we cannot live entirely without sin; yet are we bidden to strive against sin, never knowingly to give way to it, "Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy" (Lev. xix. 2), was not

written without its meaning. Neither our Saviour's admonition, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matt. v. 48.) Those who strive to reach perfection will come nearer to it, than those who are indifferent about it; therefore let us "covet earnestly the best gifts," that is, seek earnestly after them, and seeking we shall find. God is never tired of giving us grace, it is we that get tired of asking. No one ever yet sought Him diligently in the right way without being rewarded for their pains: "O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him." (Ps. xxxiv. 8.)

CHAPTER II.

GOD'S LOVE TO HIS PEOPLE.

How slow we are to believe in God's mercy and love towards us; that He wishes us well, and would not that any should perish, "that His hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But that it is our iniquities which have separated between us and our God, and our sins which have hid His face from us."

When God set apart even one family who should fear and serve Him with perfect hearts, how soon sin crept in among them. How sadly they provoked the Lord to anger. Abraham the faithful, at the command of God, was willing to offer up as a sacrifice his son Isaac whom he so dearly loved,—and God having proved His sincerity, not only spared him the blow, but honoured him with many tokens of His Divine favour.

But how soon did his descendants fall away! Isaac the child of promise, had two sons, Esau and Jacob. Surely these should

have lived in love and peace, but instead of love, bitter enmity grew up between them, so that they were obliged to part for many years.

And Jacob's children did not walk so closely with God, as might have been expected would have been the result of God's especial protection, but went wrong, and then sold their younger brother, because they could not bear his more blameless life.

And doubtless their affliction was needed in the land of Egypt, that they might acknowledge the power of God in time to come, and that they might remember the great and wonderful deeds He had worked on their behalf.

Yet, on their deliverance from the house of bondage, they did not put their whole trust in God their rescuer; but, in the absence of Moses, desired Aaron to make them a god which should go before them,—so perverted was the heart of man, so altered since first formed in the image of God. This sin, undoubtedly, was the cause of much present and future misery which fell upon the Israelites; for though at the earnest intercession of Moses, the people were spared, “Nevertheless, in the day when I

visit, I will visit their sin upon them," (Ex. xxxii. 34), were the words of the Almighty, against whom they had sinned.

Surely, the having their daily food supplied to them in such a miraculous manner direct from heaven, must cause them to believe and fear God. But no, "they forgot the Lord their Maker," and at the least difficulty murmured at Moses, which, in reality, was murmuring against God, by whose direction Moses acted. Even Moses allowed impatience to overcome him in an unwatchful moment, and the "Hear now, ye rebels; must 'we' fetch you water out of this rock." (Num. xx. 10.) And the rod that was used to smite the rock in contrariety to the command of God: "Speak ye unto the rock before their eyes, and it shall give forth his water,"—brought the word, "Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." (Num. xx. 12.)

So frail is man, so perfectly unable of himself to always stand upright.

Sin will, must, and does bring its punishment. God must show His just hatred of sin, and though He is ever willing to forgive

and receive into His fold all who are truly penitent; yet, often they suffer from the consequences of their sin, before their death.

God is ever willing—yea, wishes all men to be saved. It grieves Him that they will walk so contrary to their own everlasting happiness. He is sorry when He sees any of His people going astray. “He doth not willingly afflict.” “As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?” (Ez. xxxiii. 11.)

And again it is written, “Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores.” (Isa. i. 5, 6.)

Oh ye who think hard thoughts, little know ye of the love and forbearance of your Maker, “In all their affliction He was afflicted,” (Isa. lxiii. 9.) “For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil,

to give you an expected end.” (Jer. xxix. 11.)

Man rebels against all that comes in opposition to him; and the flesh and the spirit since the fall, are (and ever will be in this life) in continual warfare, “For the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him.” (1 Cor. ii. 14.) “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.” (Gal. v. 17.) Our Saviour says, “Ye must be born again.” A complete change takes place in the regenerate heart, and sinners when converted will hate and abhor those things which, while unconverted, they took pleasure in.

But ask yourself, reader,—Which are the happiest, the godly or the ungodly? Those who love God, or those who mock and scoff?

The children of God may be poor, may sometimes scarcely know where they shall obtain their daily bread; yet they will tell you that “man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord.” (Deut. viii. 3.) They will tell you there is a peace which

passeth all understanding, the Peace of God, which enableth the soul to lightly regard the things of time, looking forward to a glorious eternity. They have no fear, for God is their refuge, a very present help in time of trouble. If they suffer pain they know the sweet promise, "If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him."

They are enabled to cast their care "by prayer" upon God, for He careth for them.

But a person need not necessarily be poor to be a partaker of the joys which are in store for the children of God. Poor in spirit they must be, not resting upon anything they have done or can do; for after we have done our best, we must make the acknowledgment,—“We are but unprofitable servants, we have only done that which it was our duty to do.” But you who have riches, have greater responsibilities; you have more time at your disposal, and more influence: if used aright what blessings it may bring, but if not, it will only add to your sins.

It is often by sharp means that God brings us home to Himself; prosperity too often keeps us from God, "They poured out a prayer when Thy chastening was upon them."

A wise parent is quite as grieved to be obliged to punish its child, as the child is to be punished, but it is done for the child's welfare; and when the child is older, and has knowledge to understand, it is able to perceive how much it is indebted to such guidance and care. And there will come a time when we shall thank God for those very afflictions which seem so hard to bear now.

Oh could we more fully understand the great love that God has towards His people, how very different would our sojourn on earth seem. If God did not love us, would He bear so long with our infirmities and ignorances. Would He not exterminate us from off the face of the earth, when we so greatly rebel against Him. But He still bears with us, nor does His mercy end until we refuse to accept it. As long as there is any hope, God will not cast us off.

CHAPTER III.

HINDRANCES TO RELIGION.

THE greatest hindrance to religion is the evil of our own hearts; for we know that if we could have lived holy, blameless lives, without sin, we should have had no need of a Saviour. But we know also that "there is none that doeth good, and sinneth not," and that "if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us: but, if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John i. 8, 9.)

"We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God." But, are we all doing our best to strive against sin? Do we pray earnestly that grace and strength may be given us from above, that we may be enabled to fight the good fight of faith: and finally to overcome our spiritual enemies, and all that hinders us from giving our hearts to God? We have no power of ourselves to do that which is right, but

God, for Christ's sake, has promised to give the aid of the Holy Spirit unto those who earnestly seek for the same. And when the Holy Spirit takes possession of the heart all things are changed. When the heart is spiritual it takes pleasure in spiritual things. But, should we grow careless, and grieve the Holy Spirit, "then God hideth Himself," and the heart is filled with trouble. The Psalmist mourned the absence of God when he said, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God." (Ps. xlii. 1, 2.)

If we will return to God, He will return to us. But, when we have gone astray from Him and fallen into sin, we must confess that we have done that which was wrong: and sincerely desire by His help to do better for the time to come.

God is ever ready to pardon. Look at the thief on the cross; how soon was his prayer answered. See also Mary Magdalene, and Saul of Tarsus. These had wandered far from God, but known alone to Him was the actual amount of their sin. St. Paul said that he obtained mercy because "he did it ignorantly, in unbelief."

Elijah, who grieved so much because he

saw his brethren turning to idolatry; exclaimed in the anguish of his mind, "And I, even I only, am left!" But God's answer was, "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal." (1 Kings xix. 18.) Seven thousand! could that faithful Prophet have perceived them, how his heart would have leapt for joy! But mortal man cannot accurately judge his fellow-creatures. Many of those whom we may commend and look upon with pleasure, feeling sure that they are walking in the narrow path: may yet, if unwatchful, swerve aside from the right, and fall into some pitfall placed in their way by the enemy who goeth about seeking whom he may destroy. Nor should we be quick to condemn those who have fallen. For though their sins have been ever so flagrant in the sight of men, we know not how often they pray and weep in secret over those very sins.

"Judge not, that ye be not judged," is our Saviour's command. There is only one fit Judge, who cannot err—the Judge of all mankind, our Saviour. "For inasmuch as He was in all points tempted like as we are,"—by His human nature—"yet without sin;"—by His divine nature—"so can He

alone see and know all that is passing in each heart." He sees the temptation; sees the conflict; knows the particular besetting sin: and hereafter will reward according to each separate case. "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days, wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr." (Rev. ii. 13.)

Another hindrance to religion is bad and profane books; another, light and ungodly companions. We have great need to "watch and pray," lest we fall into sin unawares. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." Those who have fallen into grievous sins might often look back and trace the gradual declension. How in those things which were not positively evil, but inexpedient, a too great indulgence in has been the means of keeping their hearts from God. God must be the first in our hearts—not last. In everything we do, we must do it as unto the Lord. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."

If we were to commune with our own hearts oftener, we should be kept back from many sins. We should ask ourselves: Is

the God whom we were formed to worship the chiefest thought in our hearts? Is heaven, the beautiful abode prepared for us, where we shall dwell for ever with the Lord, and join with angels in singing His praises, the great object for which we are living? Is our conversation of heaven; and do we talk one to another of those spiritual things which belong to our common salvation; strengthening one another? Alas! how few of us live up to the high standard that we might reach. How few of us count everything else valueless, so that we may win, and be found in Christ.

Why so much weariness? Why so many heavy countenances? Why so many bitter disappointments? Is it not because we labour so hard for the meat that perisheth: forgetting that which endureth unto Eternal Life? Oh, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." (1 John ii. 15—17.)

Again, always avoid everything which tends to lessen in your estimation the great importance of religion. Recollecting that the work of sanctification is a growing work, not completed till the body shall return to dust, and the spirit unto God who gave it. We are commanded to grow in grace. Our Saviour said to His disciples, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." (1 John xvi. 12.) So are we taught by the Holy Spirit: as we are able to bear His teachings. Some drawn by the cords of love; others snatched as brands from the burning fire; "For the bruised reed He will not break, nor quench the smoking flax."

A want of unity is also a great hindrance to the progress of religion. If ye are all seeking the same object; all loving the same God; all trusting in the same Saviour; all hoping to share the same heaven for ever, why argue ye about those lesser differences of opinion, which are in comparison as the shell is to the kernel, or the casket to the jewel? God has given to us in the Bible a record which contains everything that it is necessary for us to believe. In the book of Genesis we read of the creation of the world. In the Revelation we are carried forward to

the end of the world : when the dead, small and great, shall stand before God. And, because of the hardness of the natural heart, which receiveth not the things that be of God, shouldest thy weak and wavering faith stumble at ought that is written in the Bible ; if thou wilt ask for God to direct thee, thine eyes shall be opened, and thine heart be enabled to understand all that it is needful that thou shouldest.

Religion is meant for all. Its requirements all can fulfil. It embraces all who will come. Oh ! that religion may abound more and more : even the true religion which consists in worshipping God. All else fades away, but this will abide for ever : when time itself shall be no more.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHRISTIAN'S CONFLICTS.

It has ever been a mark of true religion, that it has met with opposition. The religion of Christ, is a religion which is peaceable, pure, and kind. The principles which it teaches are, that we should be forbearing and forgiving. It does not in the least tend to discord. Yet how was it received ?

The Jewish people who were looking for a Saviour, would not receive Him when He came : “ He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.” Christ told them of an easy and the only way whereby men could obtain forgiveness of their sins, and peace with God. He had done nothing but works of mercy and love, during the time He was with them. And yet their hatred was so great that nothing would pacify them but His death. And what was the cause of their hatred ? The contrast between Christ's life and their own. If Christ was right, they were wrong. There was as much difference between their life, and the

life of Christ, as there is between light and darkness, or between good and evil.

And as with the Master, so with His followers. They were afflicted, tormented, destitute; many lost their lives, because they were true to their faith; but God who taught them in life, supported them in death,—so that they glorified God in the midst of their sufferings, and were able to exclaim: “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” (2 Cor. iv. 17.) And is there not the same spirit of opposition to religion now? Those who come out from the multitude, and with steadfast hearts profess themselves on the Lord’s side, must not expect encouragement from those who are still living in sin. On the contrary, they will meet with discouragement, want of sympathy, and even persecution.

Some will accuse them of insincerity and hypocrisy. Others say they are quite as good as those who pretend so much. They are watched, and should their feet slip in an unwary moment, rejoicing is made at their fall; they “make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate.” (Isa. xxix. 21.)

But such judge their ownelves ; for if they can detect so much amiss in those who are struggling against sin, must there not be much more in those who are content to live without repentance at all ?

A mark of sincere Christians, is, that they are never satisfied with themselves, never think that they are good enough, and need not to be made better. They know that the Christian's life is a life of warfare ; and that they have promised to fight against " sin, the world, and the devil, and to continue Christ's faithful soldiers and servants unto their life's end."

Our Saviour said, " If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." (Matt. xvi. 24.) " In the world ye shall have tribulation ; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John xvi. 33.) St. Paul says, " I therefore so run, not as uncertainly, so fight I, not as one that beateth the air. But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." (1 Cor. ix. 26, 27.) For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world,

against spiritual wickedness in high places." (Eph. vi. 12.) Christians have to struggle, against the evil in their own hearts, and the evil all around them. To "watch and pray," that they enter not into temptation; "for our adversary is as a roaring lion, going about seeking whom he may devour." The great difference between the godly and the ungodly, does not lay so much perhaps in their total abstinence from sin, as in their hatred of sin. If they have fallen, they grieve, (like Peter when the Lord's look recalls their sin to their mind) they weep bitterly.

But though by reason of our frailty, we cannot always stand upright, yet the Holy Spirit will ever help those who seek for His guidance: and thus we are "taught of God."

Every right thing we may do, or any good thought that comes into our hearts, checking us when we should otherwise go astray; or bringing to our minds encouraging promises, when we are wearied with the conflict against sin, is the work of the Holy Spirit. "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance what-

soever I have said unto you." (John xiv. 26.) Some who have been trying hard, to do what is right, have been very discouraged because they have fallen: but be strong, and of good courage; for be assured if your heart is stedfastly fixed to do that which is right in the sight of God, "He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." (Phil. i. 6.) "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." (Luke xii. 32.) The weaker the plant, the more it will cling to its prop for support; so in our weakness let us lean more upon Him, who is the way, and the truth, and the life." "For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." (Heb. iv. 15.)

But though Christians have their conflicts, they have also their victories. Times, when spiritual comforts come from the presence of the Lord. Times when they have experienced the truth of that promise, "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you,"—when the peace of God which passeth all understanding has filled the heart with

joy. Then rising above the things of time the Christian can say, "In God have I put my trust; I will not be afraid what man can do unto me." (Psalm lvi. 11.)

They know that their rest is not here, neither do they expect it. Conscience will not accuse them, that great tormentor to the ungodly. They need not fear at the condemnation of the wicked; for as sure as there is punishment for the wicked, so also is there a reward for the righteous. Safe here, safe for ever; their friend, the Omnipotent God. What then can make them afraid? To live, is to feel God's presence; "To die, is to be for ever with the Lord." Their trust is not in princes, nor in the sons of men. No! in something far higher, far nobler, far mightier. In a Power which created and sustains all things.

Oh, Christian, think of thy future, when thy heart fainteth at the roughness of the way. Look upward, look to the end. Though thou mayest not "now" be able to discern the hand of love, but rather the rod of affliction; yet hereafter all shall be made plain, and thou acknowledge that all things have worked together for thy good. Think "what" it will be to have gained the victory, though it "should" cost thee hard fighting.

Let the conqueror's crown be before thine eyes. Watch, pray, persevere. Then thou wilt be able to "count it all joy, when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." (James i. 2, 4.) And "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him." (verse 12.)

In the hour of thy temptation, think of thy Saviour's temptation in the wilderness. In the hour of anguish, think of thy Saviour's agony in the garden of Gethsemane — "When, being in an agony, He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." (Luke xxii. 44.) In the hour of death, think of Him who died, yea rather, who is risen again; who is gone to prepare a place for you, that where He is there ye may be also. Oh! for the joy that is set before you, endure unto the end, for, "He that endureth unto the end, the same shall be saved."

Recollect in thy heaviest affliction that

thou hast deserved it, and that it is needful, nor question God's dealings with thy soul : for what He does, thou knowest not now ; but thou shalt know hereafter.

Oh, when once thou hast entered heaven, how trivial will seem to thee thy few trials while on earth. The joy will so greatly overbalance them, that they will appear comparatively as nothing.

Be more earnest in your religion when affliction cometh. Take it as sent from God, to rouse thee up, to prevent thy sleeping ; and endeavour to find out what duty you are neglecting. Hast thou neglected thy duty to God ? or thy duty to man ? " Afflictions spring not from the ground," " and God doth not willingly afflict," so that trouble comes as a messenger from God for our welfare.

If we place our hopes on our worldly goods, we may tempt God to withdraw them, lest we endanger the safety of our everlasting souls, for that which is perishing. If we centre our fondest affections upon our fellow creatures, they may be removed from us ; that we may not forget that our first duty is to love God, and make all else subservient to this great end. If we seek for pleasure only for our own selfish gratification, this is

wrong, and brings its punishment in proving a snare to us.

All our powers belong to God ; and until we learn this great truth, we shall not soar high above the world in our everyday life, but remain dwarfed and stunted, unable to rise. Some take a lifetime to learn that they cannot serve God and the world. Unhappy they ; for in striving for both they enjoy neither. But others learn and obey. They make the better choice, and remain steadfast unto the end.

CHAPTER V.

WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS OF RELIGION.

THE requirements of religion are—love to God, and love to man. First we must love God; love, as a child loves its kind parents. Love, because we are entirely dependant upon God. Because without His Will we should never have existed, and consequently never have been able to partake of that great and glorious happiness, which is in store for the people of God. Love, because He has always loved us. Because, when we have gone astray like lost sheep, He has sought for us, and brought us back again. Love Him, because He is Love, and altogether loveable.

“God is Love.” Scripture abounds with proofs of it, whether it be in “So loving the world, that He gave His only begotten Son to die for us;” or whether it be in waiting so long and patiently for the fruits of His forbearance and mercy, we may trace the deep compassionating love of God. How long He bore with the sins of the Israelites! how slow to strike! how ready to save! How forgiving to any who would

return unto Him, and cease from rebelling against that Divine Power, “in whom we live, and move, and have our being.” The rain which cometh down so softly, watering the earth, and causing the seed which has been sown to take root, and in due time to yield its increase; the sun giving us light and warmth, the trees, the flowers, the fruits; all proclaim the truth,—God is Love. And what is required of us in return for all God’s love? That we should love God. And this not with part of our hearts only, not love God a little, and the world a little; such half-hearted service is not acceptable to God. But to love Him “with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind.”

Is this any hardship? Nay, it is a great blessing to have hearts given us capable of loving God. To know God, and to love Him, will be the highest perfection of happiness hereafter; when every cloud will be removed, and nothing remain but the sunshine of His Love.

The highest height of earthly happiness is to love, and to be loved. And the highest height of heavenly bliss, is to love God, and feel God’s love to us.

Those who wish to love God, must recol-

lect that it requires sincerity to do so, for "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." (John iv. 24.)

We are told to count the cost; and that no man, putting his hand to the plough, and looking back (or wishing he had not), is fit for the kingdom of God.

It requires Faith! For Faith means Belief, and how can we love that which we do not believe in? "We walk by faith, and not by sight," and "without faith, it is impossible to please God." "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." By faith we trust God, believing He will perform all that He has promised.

It requires prayer. Prayer is the life of religion; it is by prayer that we "draw nigh to God, and He draws nigh to us." "Pray without ceasing," for by prayer we are holding intercourse with God; we are speaking out our thoughts to Him, and experiencing the truth of that promise, "Ask, and ye shall have." Those who love God most, will be most in prayer.

We must also have patience, "For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have

done the will of God, ye might receive the promise." (Heb. x. 36.)

The second requirement of religion, is love to man, for "If a man say I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar : for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen." (1 John iv. 20.)

These words of Scripture show most forcibly how impossible it is to love God, without having love towards our fellow creatures. Love to God must produce love to man, without love to man there can be no love to God. "Beloved, (saith St. John), if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us." "God is love ; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." (1 John iv. 11, 12, and 16.)

Now what is meant by loving one another? Does it not mean that we should help one another ; that we should sympathise one with another ; that we should be kind, gentle, forbearing, and forgiving, one towards another ; that we should let the bond of affection encircle all those whom we may

come in contact with. He who loves his neighbour as himself, is no longer selfish; he does not only think of his own interests, but is able also to "rejoice with those who do rejoice, and weep with those that weep." There are some who would think it a great sin to neglect their own family; though do not care to go beyond it. But this is wrong. For though quite right to care for our own, who, naturally have an especial claim upon us, yet we must not lose sight of the truth, that we all belong to one great family: that we all have one Father; and that with the Lord there is no respect of persons, "but he that doeth righteousness in every nation shall be accepted." For with Him "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all." (Col. iii. 11.) "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." (Rom. xii. 4, 5.)—Our Saviour said, "A new commandment I give unto you: that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye

have love one to another." (John xiii, 34, 35.) "For all the 'law' is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (Gal. v. 14.) "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

Oh, if there were more true love shown in our dealings with one another; how much more happiness there might be, for pure unselfish love would make us sooner bear an injury ourselves, than throw the burden upon another. "And though we had sworn to our own hurt, change not." St. Paul gives us a most beautiful description of charity, or love to man, in the 1 Cor. xiii.—"Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." Alas! how little of such love as this do we see around us: and yet St. Paul says, "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

It is worse than useless to profess we love

our fellow creatures, unless we are prepared to show forbearance and mercy to them, "even as God for Christ's sake hath showed it to us." Nor will it profit us to say to those in distress, "Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled," unless we give them food and clothing.

If we love our fellow creatures, we shall also bear with their infirmities. It is written "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." (Gal. vi. 1.)

What a beautiful meaning lies in these words, when we see that another has fallen, we are to try to restore him or her back to the right way, in the spirit of meekness, (not as if we were better than they, but fearful lest we ourselves should fall.) Let us not forget that the only return we can make to God, for all His goodness to us either in temporal or spiritual gifts, is to do all the good we can with them, by using them for the benefit of our fellow creatures. "And even a cup of cold water, given in the name of Jesus, and for His sake, shall not lose its reward."

If we love one another, we shall also try to assist one another. The strong can help

the weak. The learned the unlearned. The rich the poor. None can say they are of no use in the world, if they are trying to make themselves useful. Some may say, if they had not so many calls upon their time; they would most willingly seek out the poor and afflicted, and endeavour to assist them; but, say they, my time is so occupied in home duties,—yet even in those very home duties, how much room there is for practising charity and self-denial. As one kind considerate heart may cause much joy and comfort to many; so one person's exacting disposition may throw a gloom over a whole household. A master's or mistress's thoughtlessness or indifference may form a heavy yoke for the dependant to bear. Harsh words uttered carelessly, sink deep in the sensitive heart, causing hours of pain and unhappiness. Perhaps you did not mean to give pain. If you had thought they would have felt it so, you would have acted differently; but put yourself in their place, and try to realise how you yourself would have borne the same, remembering our Saviour's words, "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." (Matt. vii. 12.)

If we have love to one another, we shall

also forgive one another, not bearing resentment towards those who may have injured us; but forgiving from the heart those who have been our greatest enemies: praying for them as Stephen prayed for his murderers, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Or as our dear Saviour prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

If we wish to know whether we love our fellow creatures as we should, let us apply to ourselves this test,—Are we kind and gentle, not only to those who are kind, and love us: ("for sinners also love those that love them,") but to those who reject our proffered kindness; who return evil for our good, or attribute wrong motives to our actions. By thus doing, we shall be imitating the example of our Saviour, who taught us to "love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, to do good to them that hate us, and to pray for them which despitefully use us and persecute us." There is a sweet promise attached to forgiveness: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you." But to the unforgiving, how awful the words, "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matt. vi. 14, 15.)

CHAPTER VI.

WHO MAY BE SAVED ?

Who may be saved ? All who desire to be. For, "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Rev. xxii. 17.) "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters ; and he that hath no money ; come ye, buy, and eat ; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." (Isa. lv. 1.) "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. xi. 28.) "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord : though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow : though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool ;—if ye be willing and obedient." (Isa. i. 18, 19.)—Not one class, not one sect, but everyone who wishes to be saved, "may come." And our Saviour saith, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in nowise cast out." The young and

the aged, the poor and the rich, the weak and the strong, may come. And coming, shall not be sent away empty.

God is waiting to be gracious. "He desireth not the death of a sinner, but would rather that he may turn from his wickedness and live." He has bidden you to come. He has told you that if you come you shall not be rejected. You will not be rejected on account of your past sins, for Christ died to save sinners. Nor on account of your weakness, for "God's strength is made perfect in weakness." Nor on account of your ignorance, for "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." (James i. 5.) God has bidden you to "come," with all your imperfections, therefore you have no excuse.

All are bidden, but some refuse to come. Oh! that "such" may think of all that is meant by refusing to accept God's offered mercy, "ere" it be too late, and the same sentence be passed on them which was passed on those who were bidden to the great marriage supper, but who treated the invitation so carelessly and slightingly: "For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my

supper.” (Luke xiv. 24.) “Oh! see that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For our God is a consuming fire.”

All may come now. God will receive all who come unto Him, for the sake of what our Saviour has done and suffered for us, “the just for the unjust.” But “now” is the time of trial; and the only chance we have of regaining our forfeited inheritance. If we despise the offer of salvation now, or carelessly banish it from our thoughts, it may be that the heart will get more and more hardened in sin, which may only be stopped by the hand of death; and “there is no repentance in the grave: nor pardon offered to the dead.”

Oh! ye who have not yet come to God, put it off no longer. You have tried the world’s pleasures: have they satisfied you? have they fulfilled their promises? Rather, have you not found “that the way of transgressors is hard”?

But God hath never promised you more than He will perform. He has promised you everlasting happiness—not for a few years, but for ever. He has promised that He will receive you into His fold. That He will purge and purify you; and when the work of regeneration and sanctification is complete,

that He will receive you into everlasting glory: if you on your part "will come." To come is all that is asked of you. You cannot make yourself clean, for "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean." But you can come to God, and He will make you clean: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." This is God's promise. But you must come "now:" "For now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." God's part is done. We had a tempter, but we have also a Saviour. But if you will not come to be saved—to be made pure and holy, to have your sins blotted out in the blood of an atoning Saviour—there is no other offer, no other remedy: "For there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." (Acts iv. 12.)

There may be some that say: I should like to come to God, but I do not know the way. Have you ever sought after the way? "For those that seek shall find." If you are in earnest, it shall come to pass "that before you call, the Lord will answer: and while you are yet speaking the Lord will hear." (Isa. lxv. 24.) "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord." (Hos.

vi. 3.) “If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine.” (John vii. 17.) When the returning penitent son was only considering in his heart what he should say to his father, “His father saw him a great way off, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.” “There is joy in the presence of the Angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.” (Luke xv. 10.)

Thus, all are left without excuse: and no one can say that the Lord doth not care for them. For God cannot cease to care for us, when the Son of God died for us; when there is “joy in heaven” even over one that repenteth.

Jesus wept, when He thought of the misery and destruction which was so soon to fall upon Jerusalem, as a punishment for their sins. And we know not how often we grieve our dear Redeemer, when we will not receive His gentle warnings: but rush heedlessly on our own way: which must bring down inevitable destruction upon us, were it not for the patient waiting and kind intercession of Him, who saith, “Lord, let it alone this year also,” in the hope that during “this year” something may soften our hearts and lead us with tears of repentance to the footstool of mercy. If we wish for proofs of

God's readiness to forgive, we may find them in these promises: "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely." (Hos. xiv. 4.) "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." (Jer. xxxi. 3.) "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee." (Isa. xlv. 22.) "When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive." (Ez. xviii. 27.) "None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live." (Ez. xxxiii. 16.)

What more could we desire than these tender words, which tell us of God's readiness to pardon and forgive. Forgive in its most beautiful sense: fully and freely. So that all we have done wrong shall not even be mentioned to us. It shall be expunged for ever, if we will return unto God. "But seek ye the Lord while He may be found:" for when once "the Master hath shut-to the door," those near to the door are excluded, as well as those afar-off. It is no good to be almost a Christian and not quite one;

to say, I will give up everything but what I most prize; and at the last "to go away sorrowful." The great offer of salvation is not a thing to be tampered with—it may never be repeated.

I think there is no one but has had serious convictions of truth at some time or another of their lives—whether heeded or unheeded. A something which will be a witness against the unrepentant at the last day; "Because when the Lord called, they refused." But to the repentant a source of unfailing delight: because then the Lord met with their soul.

All are not called by the same means, nor by the same way. To one the call may come in the recollection of a pious parent; "Go thou, and do likewise." To another, a religious book has been the instrument in God's hand. Or a word from the lips of a friend; or a sermon has reached the heart that God has prepared to receive it. These may seem small things; "But who hath despised the day of small things." It is God that speaketh to you, through these very means. Then, resist not the influence that would steal over you for good. Cast it not aside and say, "When I have a more convenient opportunity I will listen to these

warnings;" for that is hardening your heart ;
and the warnings, if rejected, will grow
fainter and fainter, till at last they cease :
for God hath said, " My Spirit shall not
always strive with man."

CHAPTER VII.

FOR THE YOUNG.

“REMEMBER now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.” (Eccles. xii. 1.) These are the words of the “wise king.” He asked for an understanding heart; and God gave him wisdom, riches, and honour. Now let us consider a few reasons why the young should come to God in their youth.

In the first place, you owe it to God. “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.) You owe allegiance to your “Maker,” not for the latter part of your life only, but for all your life: therefore you have no right to trifle away your early years. Youth is

the best time to seek God. The young are especially under His protection—"He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom." (Isa. xl. 11.) The mind too is more tender; you are not exposed to such temptations in youth as you will meet with as you grow older. And God has promised that, "Those who seek Him early shall find Him."

Again, you may never live to be old, many are called away by death when quite young; some by an accident; some by a lingering disease; others, just as the bud gave promise of a beautiful flower, are cut down suddenly. There will be little children in heaven as well as grown-up people. God loves little children, and He often teaches them by His Holy Spirit of heaven, and heavenly joys, so that they are prepared to die. They love to think of God who is so good, and of Jesus who bore so much for their salvation: they love to think that, some day they shall be with God and sing His praises. And sometimes it pleases the Lord to call them from this world to gather them safely into His fold, before sin and the world blight them.

Again, if you give your youth to God,

you will be preserved from many deadly sins—sins which would bind you as a strong chain, and make it much harder for you to come to God in after years. God has said, “My son, give me thine heart.” Nothing else will do instead—no other sacrifice will be accepted, unless the heart is offered with it. But have those given their hearts to God, whose minds are continually dwelling upon earthly things? Who allow what they shall eat, and what they shall drink, and what they shall wear, to occupy the first place in their heart, to the exclusion of God’s command,—“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”—Oh, if such were to think more seriously of their future—of all that is involved in their choice between everlasting happiness or everlasting misery—how trivial would the things of this world appear in comparison.

Those who wish to come to God, and to serve Him, will be anxious to know how they can best do so. This the Bible will teach you; but when reading God’s Holy Word, do not do so hurriedly, as if

it were an unpleasant task—but prayerfully, thoughtfully, and studiously.

If any one were to tell you, that you had a beautiful mansion left you by a friend or relative, but that it would give you a great deal of trouble before you could prove your claim to it, you would at once desire to see and hear all you could about it, not thinking of any trouble it may cost you, for the obtaining of the end, you would say, will more than compensate for all.

Well, you have an inheritance offered to you if you will accept it—an inheritance where sorrow will never come, where all that vexes and annoys now will never enter—an inheritance which Christ died to purchase for all who will accept it. Then will you not take some pains to try and find out all you can about your heavenly inheritance. And this the Bible will tell you: don't just open it languidly, once or twice, and then close it with the thought,—I don't seem to be any better than I was before. No; search diligently to try and find out the truth. Ask God's blessing upon your endeavours, and then read humbly and earnestly; and if you will persevere in this one thing, not one

week, but many weeks, you will not fail in the end to find a blessing. The eyes will be opened, and the heart be enabled to understand those things which are hidden to the careless and unobservant.

Another reason why you should devote your youth to God is,—you can be working for Him; your example will be for good; what you do and say, if you are converted, will show forth the power of God in your heart; you will be willing to spend, and be spent in His service. By coming to God when young, you will be able to offer an acceptable sacrifice to Him; and instead of being obliged to acknowledge that your bad example has led others into sin, may, by the blessing of God, see the fruit of your endeavours to rescue others from sin.

The word of warning to one, of counsel to another, the timely help to another, are seeds, and though we may never be able to see whether they take root, or are lost, yet, “blessed are they that sow beside all waters.” A little tract given to a child, or a wayfarer, has often brought a blessing. A religious book has been the means of rescuing the ungodly from the destruction they were hastening to. Oh, never be

tired of working for God, "be instant in season and out of season," be patient and persevering, though you meet with no encouragement. "For they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever;" and "he that watereth others, himself shall be watered."

But if not living to the glory of God, your example will only lead others astray. How very many can trace their downfall to bad companions; and as others (through their not being careful in the choice of their companions) had power to do them hurt, so again their example does harm to others. And how very sad to have to reflect—perhaps on a deathbed—that you have in some measure caused the ruin of others. By giving your youth to God, you will spare yourself these piercing sorrows; you will also avoid the trouble that evil habits will otherwise give you. Some who come to God in later years are very much troubled about their past lives—they can truly say, "The remembrance of their sins is grievous to be borne,"—they sometimes are tempted to think that they were too bad to be forgiven, or some sin breaks out afresh, and requires great watchfulness, lest it should get the upper hand.

One more reason why you should come to God in your youth is, that if you wilfully neglect to come to God when young—when you have been shown the way, religion is not a thing to be tampered with—and, you may never feel any more inclination to come, until it is too late.—But you cannot come to God of your own accord; you must pray first, for forgiveness of past sins, and also for strength to do better for the future. If you are promised a gift for asking, and yet you will not ask for it, can you expect to receive it? God has promised to give you the Holy Spirit, to purify your heart, and teach you all things that belong to your salvation, if you seek this gift by prayer. Then let your prayer be every night and morning, “O Lord, give me Thy Holy Spirit to dwell within me,” until thou art able to exclaim, “The Lord hath heard the desire of my heart, He hath granted my petition.”

CHAPTER VIII.

TO THE MIDDLE-AGED.

You that have passed the spring of your days; who have reached the time of manhood or womanhood; who are in the very prime of your life—the workers of the present age—how are you spending your time? Are you working for God, or against Him? Are you fighting in the great warfare against sin, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ; or, do you belong to those who do not trouble themselves about anything but themselves? The time is hastening on: a few more years, and those busy hands will cease to move with such alacrity. That busy brain will think more slowly. If you should live to a good old age, it will not then be the eager time of sowing; but rather the time of reaping what has been sown. And, oh, remember nothing that has been sown is entirely lost; it will bring forth good fruit or bad fruit. This thought should make us very humble and serious—watchful, lest deed or action of ours

should prove a stumbling-block in the path of another.

Are there any who wish to know how they may serve and glorify God by their daily life? Such may find the answer in St. Matt. v. 16—"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." That is, in all your dealings be just and honest. Always speak the truth. Let your word always be believed, because those that know you are sure that you would not intentionally deceive them—know you are worthy to be trusted. If you are connected with trade, let your place of business be such that none can say they have been overreached, or taken in, by you; that they have bought an unsound article for a sound. On the contrary, let those that deal with you, be able to say—I can trust him or her; for they fear God.

The same rule will apply to all, whether masters, mistresses, or servants. In whatever position you may be placed, or in whatever lot your life may fall, you will have your duties, cares, and trials. And it is the way in which you fulfil your duties, bear your cares, and overcome your trials, by which all men may know whether ye

are followers of the Lord or not. Our Saviour's command is, "Seek ye, first, the kingdom of God and His righteousness." Let this have thy first thoughts—thy greatest consideration. Nothing you seek besides should have half the weight with you, as seeking first your title to the kingdom of God; "Then casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you."

Now we cannot help feeling, when tired, vexed, and weary, with troubles without, and conflicts within, that it is a great privilege to be allowed to go to God in prayer, as to a Father—the creature in supplication to the Creator. Not speaking to some one who cannot understand us, or who might attribute wrong motives to our actions; but to Him who knoweth all the secret thoughts of the heart, who formed the spirit of man within him; to Him who does not promise to take away all our troubles and trials; but who does promise to enable us to bear them; to give us strength to combat with, and overcome them. Who does not promise to take us out of the world; but does promise to keep us from the evil that is in the world, if we seek refuge in Him. Those who serve God in the time of prosperity, shall find in Him

an Almighty Protector and Comforter in the day of adversity.

One, perhaps, of the greatest temptations we are liable to, is the thought—I am no worse than others. I only do what others do; the sins I commit others commit. But this is a sad delusion. It is true others may commit the same sin as yourself; but that does not excuse you in the least. You know that it is wrong; that God has forbidden it—therefore you yourself are inexcusable. All sin is hateful in the sight of God, and therefore to be resisted. “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you.”

Again, another person’s sins may be open to you; but not so their repentance: that alone may be known to God,—while you yourself remain unrepentant, excusing yourself by the falls of others. Each of us must work out our own salvation “with fear and trembling”—watchful, careful, lest putting our hand to the plough, and looking back, we are counted unworthy of the kingdom of Heaven. Quite a separate work goes on in each separate heart. What may not injure one may prove fatal to another.

“To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.” (James iv. 17.)

And there is another reason why we should not measure ourselves by the standard of another. All have not the same gifts. “He that had five talents, gained five more; he that had two, two more.” Where one may be silent, because he could not speak, it may be sin on the part of another who could, to be silent. Our standard must not be one another; but the Word of God. Our example His, who spake as never man spake. We must follow the still small voice, that whispers, This is the way, walk ye in it—turning neither to the right, or the left.

Reader, which has the most attraction for you—this life, or the life that is to come? Have you given your heart to God? or, are you totally irreligious, caring for nothing but the things of this world? Or, do you belong to that class, who are neither one thing nor the other; but who are led or driven by circumstances. If so, let this be the case no longer. You must give up the world, if you would have God for your portion. “No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the

other: or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." (Matt. vi. 24.)

If you are resting your hope of happiness upon anything short of God, you are like the man who built his house on the sand: and when the rain descends, and the floods come, and the winds blow, it will most assuredly fall. It will fall because there is no foundation, no root, nor strength in it.

Oh ye that look no higher than this present life—who are content to let your seasons of grace and opportunities for improvement pass by—unrecognised, unimproved; whose heaven is this world; who do not long for the better country—that is, an heavenly; who, like the rich man in the parable, would fain pull down your barns and build greater; and say, within your heart, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Beware, lest God should say to thee as to him, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" (Luke xii.)

If you are living in this state, not only far away from God, but quite content to be so, you are under a fearful delusion now,

and one which will, if persisted in, only reveal itself when death unveils it. When what you seldom troubled yourself to think about, is really before you ; when you have to pass through the hour of death yourself, and appear before the judgment-seat of God, alone—not to answer for what others have done, but only for what you yourself have done in the body ; of how you have kept God's law and commandments ; whether you have sought God's honour and glory in your daily life, or only thought of yourself to the exclusion of every other duty. Each will receive sentence according to their ability, knowledge, opportunities, and gifts. “And he that knew not his Lord's will, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes ; but he that knew his Lord's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.”

CHAPTER IX.

TO THE AGED.

HAVING addressed a few words to the young, and to those of maturer years, let me now say a few words to the aged. The calm, peaceful-looking face, the beautiful silvery hair, the gentle stoop, who can look upon the aged Christian without a feeling of reverence? Their work on earth is nearly done; and they can say with St. Paul, "The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." (2 Tim. iv. 6—8.) "The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness."

The young devoting their youth to God, is a beautiful sight; more so if they still continue steadfast in the thickest strife, when called to take their active part, in coming

out from the world, and being separate. But the most beautiful sight of all are the "Aged Christians"—those who have fought the fight, and won the victory; whose crowns are nearly gained; who will soon have entered their much longed-for haven of rest, where the veil is drawn aside. And each day is only hastening the time, "when being absent from the body, they will be present with the Lord." Then they can look back and see all the way the Lord hath led them—how they have been delivered in "six troubles, yea in seven also." They have experienced the truth of that promise, "And even to your old age, I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you. I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you." (Isa. xlvi. 4.)

The aged are particularly cared for in Scripture—"Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the Lord." (Lev. xix. 32.) They need have no fear, that now they are old, and not able to do much for themselves, they will be forsaken; for God has promised, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." While the young Christian looks forward, girding on his

armour for the warfare, the aged Christian looks back to the conflicts he has had, and the victories he has been enabled to win, by grace, over sin, the world, and the devil. They have nothing more to fear now; they would not go back to the world, if they might have their choice; they only wonder what attraction it can have for so many. As for them, they know its promises are false and worthless. True joys are only to be found above.

After the conflict, comes the peace; after the storm a calm. They can say, "I know in whom I have believed," even in Him who is able to perform that which He has promised. I have not put my trust in riches; for I know that I must leave them behind me. Nor have I placed my trust in anything I have done, or can do; "for all my righteousnesses are as filthy rags. But my trust is in the Lord, who made heaven and earth." They feel the more they have done, the more there yet remains to be done: the nearer they rise to heaven, the nearer they want to rise. When once they have tasted of the joys that are in store, they long for the full fruition. They are not afraid of death; for it seems but a joyful dismissal to them—when they shall

the sooner see their God, whom it has been their chiefest delight to worship through life. Their cry is, "Come, Lord Jesus."

Should any that are aged be tempted to exclaim, But I am quite useless, and only a burden upon others! Nay, the Lord has a work for even thee to do. During thy long lifetime thou hast had many opportunities of seeing and hearing of His wondrous works and ways. Then what thou hast experienced, tell to others. Words of counsel and advice, coming from the aged, speak with a force that youth cannot give. And as you have taken your journey through life, so are you the better able to instruct the young in the way wherein they should go, teaching them to avoid and shun all that is evil, and to cleave to that which is good. And being as it were, by your own blameless life, the magnet stone to attract others, to go and do likewise—a lengthened lifetime spent for God. Oh, what a rich reward will it bring hereafter; for God has said, "Them that honour me, I will honour." And our Saviour saith, "Who-soever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. x. 32.)

But what shall I say to the aged sinner—to those who scorn all God's offers of pardon, and reject His mercy; who have had much time for repentance, and yet will not repent. Oh, beware, lest this awful sentence fall upon you—"Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof. I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh—when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you." (Prov. i. 24—27.)

God has invited you to come to Him; He has called to you—beware lest ye refuse. He has stretched forth His hands to you, yea, beseeched you to come, ere it is too late. Beware lest ye disregard Him! It has been said, that while there is life there is hope; but you have nearly lived the allotted number of years to man. Your life will very soon be ended: very soon you must give an account of your stewardship, before that just God who will demand a strict reckoning for every single talent entrusted to thy care.

The debts and shortcomings of those who

believe in Jesus are cancelled ; not so those of unbelievers. In the world to come, there will be but two classes : believers and unbelievers—the saved and the unsaved. You must belong to one or the other ; the choice rests with yourself. They were accepted at the eleventh hour ; but if they had not gained admittance then, they would have been excluded for ever. And if you still persist in turning a deaf ear to every entreaty and warning, death will come—and then it will be too late.

As you loved not God, so neither will you be with Him. As you loved sin, bad companions, and darkness, so that must then be your everlasting portion. “ Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched ” ; and this for ever and ever. It will be of no use to say, I never thought of these things. For, for what else was your life given you ? you have had them constantly brought before you—in some form or another ; and if you wilfully turn a deaf ear to them, the sin will rest on yourself.

You have had your Bible, and your church : and if you say, I have not read my Bible, nor attended church—it will only be to your shame. You have heard others speaking of the danger ; you have seen

them fleeing from the wrath to come— hastening away from destruction. And yet you have stayed in an unsecure place, which threatens every moment to envelope you in its ruins. How eager thou hast been on less important matters. Hadst thou been as eager after heavenly information, thou wouldst never have come to this sad state.

CHAPTER X.

TO THE CARELESS.

CAN there be any "careless," when it is such an important thing as your everlasting happiness which demands your attention? Alas! there are too many, careless and thoughtless, spending their time in frivolous employments, with no serious thoughts of the future. Sad indeed are such cases! It would be better far to suffer any deprivation in this life, and to have a title to your home above, than to have every charm that this world can offer, with a careless and godless heart; for, "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. xvi. 26.)

Careless! could you be so if you were confined in a prison, expecting every day to be brought out, and condemned to a painful death? And remember that you are lying under sentence of death and "everlasting misery;" for all live under this sentence who will not accept the mercy that is offered to

them, for our Saviour's sake. And yet you are careless. It does not give you any uneasiness. Alas! you say Peace, peace—when there is no peace. And when, if ever, you come to a different state of mind, you will be able to see your folly in its true light.

Some may say, I never looked at carelessness and indifference in this way before; they told me I was young and giddy: but I never thought of the sin of wasting my time and opportunities. But this will be no excuse for you hereafter, none are left without warning. And even should you unhappily belong to the number of those who have not had the privilege of pious parents to instruct you in your youth, yet you cannot deny but that you have had opportunities of hearing and knowing religious truths, had you wished so to do. There has been your Bible—and a verse of Holy Scripture, applied to the heart by God's Holy Spirit, has been the means of conversion. It is not the means you want: it is the wish—it is the will. None ever came to God in vain; and He who opened Lydia's heart, can also open yours. But as yet you have no inclination to serve God. In your present state you would not be happy in heaven—

even were it possible that you could gain admittance there; for there is not more difference between black and white, than there is between earthly and heavenly thoughts. "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (Rom. viii. 7.) You are asleep as far as regards your future state: and Satan still strives to keep you asleep. Unless you rouse yourself; unless you rise up determined to judge for yourself whether these things be so or not, you are in danger of still being asleep—of still being careless: until you find out your life's mistake—when too late. Recollect this one thing, that you cannot get to heaven in this careless way. For "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." (Matt. xi. 12.) And we must "strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." "Tremble, ye women, that are at ease; be troubled, ye careless ones." (Isa. xxxii. 11.) For in the great day of judgment ye will have no excuse. Think of all that is at stake; nor so willingly let your richest jewel—the pearl of great price—elude your grasp. You may not be what the world calls a great sinner; nay, you

may even be held up as a pattern for others, and yet your heart be far from God. For if you are careless—caring for none of those things which concern your salvation—you are very different to the children of God. Vain are all outward observances, unless the heart be moved.

The Christian can be discerned by his works: but thou dost not care for works. Thou wouldest have the name, if thou couldst get it without putting thyself to any inconvenience, and trouble thyself no farther. But hereafter, unless thou alterest, thou wilt be obliged to see what a great gulf lieth between thee and a Christian. Thou never hadst any love towards God. Thou never felt real sorrow for thy sins, mourning over them day and night. Thou never felt thy need of a Saviour: nor wert thankful that Christ died to save thee. Thou never prayed for God's Holy Spirit to sanctify thee, for thou never felt thy need of being made better. Thou wert satisfied with thyself that thou wert as good as others: and with that rested content. In youth you said, I must have pleasure now: I will think of religion when I am older. When maturity comes, you say, I have so much to employ me, I really cannot find time. And shouldest thou

live to be old, then comes the thought—I would: but by my heart is so hardened by a long course of sin, that I fear it is too late. Then, when you look back upon your past life, it will be to see it in its true light; remembering how often thou hast slighted God's warning messages; how often thou hast stopped thine ear and hardened thine heart when one with earnest persuasion has besought thee to return from the way of evil, and to devote thy life to God: times when your own heart has warned you that you were in the wrong; when you have been checked for a moment, yet afterwards became as reckless as ever, and even more hardened—for each sin we commit unrepented of helps to harden the heart—until what began in carelessness about holy things, too often ends in shameless profanity.

If you reject God in your youth, and in the prime of your life, will He hear you in your old age? If you wilfully reject God "now," you may not be able to find Him in the day of need. And how can you tell that you shall live to be old? When you know what is right, if you will not do what is right, you cannot then call it ignorant sin—it is wilful, presumptuous sin; and, as

such, is far more heinous in the sight of a holy and just God.

We are not told that those who were admitted at the eleventh hour, had refused to work in the vineyard before: but that they were waiting to be hired, and no man had hired them. And though God's mercy is so great that He is ever willing to receive and forgive those that return unto Him with true repentance, yet those who *deliberately refuse* to give the best of their days to Him, very seldom really alter in their old age.

CHAPTER XI.

TO THE WEAK AND UNDECIDED.

THERE are some who would like to follow Christ, would like to belong to the number of His disciples, but who do not like to take up their cross and follow Him. They want, like Balaam, "to die the death of the righteous, and that their last end may be like his." But, like Balaam, they do not run so that they may obtain. They are willing to give up some things for the Gospel's sake, but cannot make up their minds to part with some others. Who want to serve God, and yet want to please the world. This half-hearted state will never bring you anything but dissatisfaction. It will prevent you from experiencing spiritual comforts, and will keep you dull and melancholy. You know enough of heaven and heavenly joys not to feel easy when you have broken God's commandments. And yet you have not resolution enough to say, "I will serve the Lord my God, and Him only will I serve." Such service is not pleasing to the Lord—it is

not honouring Him with all your heart. God has said, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." And again, "I will not give My glory to another." God must have the first place in our hearts and in our affections; no other object must claim that which rightfully belongeth unto Him. "If the Lord be God, then follow Him;" but pretend not to serve Him with half thy heart, for, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." (John iv. 24.)

Again, How cold and formal must be the prayers that come from an undecided heart, instead of approaching a loving Father and telling Him of all our wants and fears, assured of a merciful answer. It would seem as if we ask, and then do not expect an answer, but sink into the same melancholy state as before. In the Epistle of St. James we are told to "Ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." (James i. 6, 7.) When the heart is in this undecided state, it is generally because the affections are divided. There is something in the heart that we have made our idol—that

we have allowed to come between us and our God. And sometimes God is pleased to remove the obstacle that laid in our path to our great hindrance, by calling away our friends, or by casting our riches, or whatsoever we put our trust in, to the ground, that we may give the whole of our hearts to Him. Our Saviour saith, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he that loveth son or daughter more than Me, is not worthy of Me. And he that taketh not his cross and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it." (Matt. x. 37—39.)

Some are undecided because they are too idle to be firm. They do not like to be continually obliged to "watch and pray;" and, neglecting this great duty, they easily fall a prey to temptation. Others may be fond of worldly indulgences, and be willing to serve God if they can still keep these. But there are only two services—the service of God and the service of Satan; and we must belong to one or the other.

There are also those who do not say No, at once, when asked to do what is wrong—who parley with temptation. Then, what wonder if eventually they are overcome.

Think you a Christian should listen to the voice of the tempter? No, your answer must be "at once," "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God!" If you stop thinking and considering, every moment you stop the temptation will seem greater, and the resistance less: until in all probability it will get the upper hand.

To you that are weak in the faith, who serve the Lord with fear and trembling, be not discouraged because you are weak, but endeavour to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

God will not reject you on account of your weakness, if you are in earnest. If you wish for God to have your whole heart, if you try to exterminate everything which would hinder you from coming to Him, He will accept you; though you may not have such deep convictions of sin as some, or be able to bear such revelations of His Glory, "For God accepteth according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." The poor widow who threw into the treasury the two mites, which make a farthing, as her gift to the Lord; gave what was in His sight of more value than the much more costly gifts of the

wealthy. Why? because they gave of their abundance—they made no great sacrifice; but the poor widow's two mites was all that she had, even all her living—shewing that she gave in a right spirit, and that her heart went with it. Even so God will accept the weakest cry that comes from the contrite sinner as much as the bolder prayer from the stronger supplicant.

But it is the keeping back part which I would warn you against. Ananias and Sapphira were not obliged to sell their land, and to bring the money to the Apostles; but they must not come with part, pretending that it was the whole—for this brought a curse and not a blessing. So when we offer up ourselves—our body and soul to be the Lord's—let us render ourselves unreservedly, lest we be not accepted at all. We must not expect to find everything easy for us in this life—for in this world we shall have tribulation. “But be of good cheer, for our Saviour has overcome the world,” and as Christ has overcome, so may we overcome in His strength, and finally prove victorious.

Faint not “tried ones,” though temptations come thick and fast, for “God is

faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may able to bear it." (1 Cor. x. 13.) Only do not half give way; let your whole heart say, No, when temptation arises; never for one moment look upon it, but put it out of your way as far as possible: then it will grow smaller and smaller; but unresisted it will get stronger and stronger. Whatever would hinder us from coming to God must be cast away, even to the right eye or the right hand—those things which are the most useful and precious to us. For it is better to enter into heaven, though our pathway there be strewn with thorns; than to have every earthly joy now, and at the last to be cast into hell.

CHAPTER XII.

THE END OF THE WORLD.

READER, do you ever consider about the end of the world—or what is often called in Scripture, “The day of the Lord?” Do you ever picture to yourself that awful day—when thou for thyself—and each one for themselves must hear their sentence. “For yet a little while, and He that shall come, will come; He will not tarry.”

The day of the Lord will come, surely—suddenly—and will find people unprepared.

It will surely come! As the earth was created for the pleasure and glory of God, who formed the earth to be inhabited, so also has He appointed a time when it shall no longer continue, “And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, and sware by Him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer.” (Rev. x. 5, 6.) As once the earth was

partially destroyed by water, so will it be completely destroyed in the great day of judgment.

“The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God.” (2 Peter iii. 10—12.)

“The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly—even the voice of the day of the Lord: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress; a day of wasteness and desolation; a day of darkness and gloominess; a day of clouds and thick darkness.” (Zeph. i. 14, 15.)

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in

heaven : and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (Matt. xxiv. 29—31.) "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God : and the dead in Christ shall rise first." (1 Thess. iv. 16.)

St. Peter warns us in his second epistle, that in the last days, there shall arise scoffers walking after their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." And goes on to say, "But beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years ; and a thousand years as one day." God's time is not our time, for "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His ways higher than our ways, and His thoughts than our thoughts."

The day of the Lord will come suddenly,

“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.” (Matt. xxiv. 36.) “For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.” (Matt. xxiv. 27.) “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: but it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light.” (Zech. xiv. 6, 7.)

It will find man unprepared! “As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.” (Matt. xxiv. 37, 38.) “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.” (Verse 42.) “But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My Lord delayeth His coming; and shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the Lord of that servant

shall come in a day when he looketh not for Him, and in an hour that he is not aware of; and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Verses 48—51.)

The day of the Lord will come, when the Saviour shall come to claim His own, when time shall cease, and eternity commence.

Oh ye that are sorrowful now, let the thought of our Lord's second coming comfort you, for the time cometh, when "he that weeps, will remain as though he wept not," when your sorrow shall be turned into joy.

Ye that are living far from God, let the thought of our Saviour's second coming be the means of your conversion. He came once to save the world, His second coming will be to Judge.

"The Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." (Jude 14, 15.) The Lord cometh, "but who may abide the day of His coming."

Methinks the sight of God in His awful

purity and holiness, may well make man tremble. And were it not for the thought of our Great Redeemer, "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and humbled Himself even to death upon the cross that we might be saved," how could we ever approach Him, "Who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity"? Perhaps man will never feel so much the heinousness of sin, and from "*whence*" he has fallen, as at that solemn time.

Then, indeed, will his heart rise in fervent praise and thankfulness unto "Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father." (Rev. i. 5, 6.)

Were we to think more of the end of the world, methinks we should cease from much foolish and senseless mirth which we now take part in, remembering the Apostle's injunction, "The end of all things is at hand, be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." Should we be prepared, if the end of the world were to come to-night? And though it may not come to-night, nor

for many nights, yet it will most assuredly come.

Oh! think of this; ye that are living in sin and rebellion towards your Maker. It will be vain and useless to call upon the mountains and rocks to hide you from the presence of the Judge of all mankind when He cometh to judge the earth. Then, if you would not be condemned in the last day—set earnestly about preparing for it immediately, for “If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear”? (1 Peter iv. 18.)

CHAPTER XIII.

THE JUDGMENT.

“AND I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.” (Rev. xx. 11—13.)

“It is appointed unto all men once to die, but after death the Judgment.” “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in His body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” (2 Cor. v. 10.) “When the Son of Man

shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left." (Matt. xxv. 31—33.)

Just as death left us, just so the judgment day will find us. There can be no hypocrisy then, but "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." (Rev. xxii. 11.) He that discerneth the most secret thoughts and intents of the heart will be the judge, mortal man may err in His judgment, God cannot. Hear our Saviour's welcome to those on His right hand, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous

answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee. And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me.” (Matt. xxv. 34—40.)

We see the Christian spirit still ruling by their answer. They were not willing to take praise, which they did not consider justly their due—but the same motive which led them to assist their poorer brethren in their hour of need, would most assuredly have led them to have done the same for our Saviour, had He had need of it.

See also how nothing is lost—how all is remembered. Little perhaps may we consider, when we bestow an alms upon the poor and destitute, or sympathise with those in sorrow, of the rich reward it will hereafter bring, if it is done as unto the Lord, in obedience to His commands. But each kind action is recorded, as well as each wrong one. Oh, that all our sinful actions may be blotted out before the judgment

day, that they may not be remembered, nor rise up as witnesses against us.

Oh! what need for more watchfulness, when we consider that "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." (Matt. xii. 36.)

Did we only think more of these solemn warnings in our every day life, how many sins we should be kept back from!

Hear also the sentence pronounced on those who will stand at Christ's left hand in the great day of judgment. "Then shall He say also unto them on His left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not." (Matt. xxv. 41—43.) The important difference lies in this—the Christian did do his Lord's Will, and obey His commands, while the sinner did not do so.

Mark also the different way in which they receive their sentence—they try to make some excuse. "Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger,

or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall He answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me." (Matt. xxv. 44, 45.)

How forcibly this brings to our mind, "how faith without works is dead." And that it is useless to say, "Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled" to our destitute brethren, "notwithstanding, ye give them not those things which are needful to the body."

It also teaches us another truth, that it is impossible to serve God aright, to be true Christians, without having love to one another. Such a love as shall find its answer in deeds of mercy—not only in words.

Thus God has provided for all His creatures, that the strong shall help the weak. The rich, the poor; the able, the disabled. And those who perish for want, which could have been relieved, and die untended and uncared for—their deaths will surely be required at the hand of those who had wealth, but who so greatly misapplied it, thinking only of how it might advance their own personal comforts the most, instead of putting by a portion for the

Lord's service, recollecting that all they have, they have been given, and at their hand it will be required, and that "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" (1 John iii. 17.)

If angels are sent to minister unto us, ought we not much more to minister unto one another.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CHRISTIAN'S WELCOME.

“COME ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world.”

Come! thy sorrow is for ever past; thy tears for ever wiped away. As thou hast had thy evil things on earth; so now “come” and inherit thy good things. The world hated and despised you, because ye were not of the world; but now what would it not give, if possible, to be in your place. You have been faithful unto death—“Come,” and receive the crown of life. Ye that loved Me in the midst of difficulties, that kept My Commandments in the hour of trial, that suffered for My sake—come now, and reap the reward of your faithfulness. Ye that, to the best of your ability, honoured My Name, and My Commandments—come, and thou shalt be honoured. As thou didst endeavour to walk in the footsteps of the prophets, apostles, and holy men

of old—so now come and be with them for ever. As thou hated sin when on earth, and wert grieved when overcome by it—so now come, where all is holy and pure, where nothing unholy can enter. Thou didst believe the promises, now thou shalt experience the truth of them. Thy hour of trial is for *ever over*; it was needed to fit thee for thy future abode, and though at times it may have seemed severe, yet all was for the best; but now is the hour of thy glory and happiness, “Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” I am glad to welcome thee here; it is with pleasure that I see each one. I purchased thy pardon with My own sufferings; and by accepting it thou hast given Me joy, for I see that all My sufferings have not been in vain.—The angels also will join in welcoming the blessed to heaven.

As there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, so will there be a glad welcoming. If, as we are taught to believe, there are guardian angels about our path, ministering unto us in this life—can we doubt, but that those angels will welcome us to heaven, and there be our companions for ever.

Oh, happy those who shall be counted

worthy to obtain the resurrection unto eternal life—"For eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." (1 Cor. ii. 9.) We shall be with God—this will be our chiefest delight—Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." (Rev. xxi. 3, 4.) When this dull vision is changed to perfect vision; when faith is lost in sight; when we can look back upon the past, and trace a Father's loving hand, leading us all the way we came—gently, kindly—so full of compassion and mercy—so slow to anger, must not love a thousand-fold spring up in our hearts to Him, "Who is the author and finisher of all our joy."

It will be part of God's pleasure to promote the Christian's pleasure. As "in all their affliction He was afflicted," so in their joy will the Lord have joy; their

wrongs also will be redressed—as now the Christian is taught to be meek and patient under insults and injuries: yet, will not the unjust altogether escape unpunished. “They heap unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath.” “For vengeance is Mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.”

The Christian’s happiness will be greatly augmented by the absence of those things which formerly caused unhappiness. Sin was the great cause of the Christian’s unhappiness upon earth: but in heaven sin will never trouble more; for in heaven there entereth nothing that defileth, “And without holiness shall no man see the Lord.” The Christian will be holy, and everything around him will be holy—everything in unison. On earth, discord causes so much sorrow, little differences are continually arising which cause estrangement between those who would otherwise have been friends: but in heaven all are agreed; all join in worshipping God; all are in an ecstasy of happiness. Their joy proceeds from God, and they reflect back their joy, saying, “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for Thou hast created all things,

and for Thy pleasure they are and were created." (Rev. iv. 11.)

Disease and pain is a great drawback to happiness in this life: but in heaven there is no disease or pain. As sin was the first cause of it, so now it does not enter into heaven, where no sin is; it has all passed to corruption. Disappointment often comes to us on earth, and whatsoever we place our hopes on is liable to deceive us: but in heaven there is no disappointment; for we shall have more happiness than we could expect or desire. Pride often causes much unhappiness here; but in heaven there is no pride. Each will acknowledge that it is of God's great mercy that they are saved, while thousands of their fellow creatures are doomed to everlasting destruction. And there will be no room in their hearts for anything but thankfulness, that they were enabled to overcome and persevere unto the end.

We must also recollect that it is our "ownelves" that will enjoy this great blessedness. Changed we shall be. "This corruptible [body] must have put on incorruption, and this mortal, immortality:" but still it will be the same thinking soul that now

animates the body—purified—sanctified—but still the same. That which had been prepared for this great happiness; that which began to lead a heavenly life upon earth.

Oh, blessed state! Oh, joyous time! Oh, inconceivable happiness! which awaits the Christian. When we fix our thoughts on the glorious future it is not to be wondered at, that the things of time sink into comparative insignificance.

No wonder that holy men and women were burnt and tortured to death rather than renounce such a glorious prize. For Thou, O God, didst reveal to them glimpses of the joyous future that awaited them; even as Stephen beheld the heavens open, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.

Methinks the Christian's cry will be, "Was it for this, my soul, that thou waitedst patiently for the Lord; and now art not thou bountifully rewarded above all that thou couldst think possible?"

CHAPTER XV.

THE SINNER'S DOOM.

“DEPART from Me ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” Depart from God, whom you would not own in your lifetime. Depart from Christ, whom you would not accept as your Saviour. Depart from heaven, which you are not prepared to enter.

Depart, because you are cursed. You have brought upon yourself all the curses which are pronounced against impenitent sinners, and from which Christ would have redeemed you, having borne the curse for you; but ye would not come unto Him.

Depart into everlasting fire. You were warned that this would be the portion of sinners, “The lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.” You were warned at what a tremendous cost you were ransomed, and so enabled to have gained admittance into

heaven, and yet you would not accept the offered salvation.

It was prepared for the devil and his angels. As you were a willing captive, and lent yourself to do wickedness upon earth—thus furthering the wicked designs of Satan—so now thou must be in his company for ever.

One cause of thy future unhappiness will be to know, when too late, all that thou hast lost. To see those whom thou hast known on earth, perhaps thine own relations and friends, standing at the right hand of God, and thou thyself at the left.

Oh, bitter will be the anguish of thy spirit, for thou wilt be forced to acknowledge the justice of thy sentence; and thine eyes being then opened, thou wilt be enabled to perceive how easily thou couldest have escaped that terrible voice of most just judgment.

Oh, if thy punishment would cease after a thousand years, it would be more endurable: but it is for ever, and the greatest aggravation of thy sufferings will be that thou hast brought them all upon thyself.

“The day of the Lord cometh as a thief

in the night; and when men shall say, Peace, and all things are safe, then shall sudden destruction come upon them, as sorrow cometh upon a woman travailing with child, and they shall not escape. Then shall appear the wrath of God in the day of vengeance, which obstinate sinners, through the stubbornness of their heart, have heaped unto themselves; which despised the goodness, patience, and long-sufferance of God, when He calleth them continually to repentance: then shall they call upon Me, (saith the Lord,) but I will not hear; they shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me; and that, because they hated knowledge, and received not the fear of the Lord; but abhorred My counsel, and despised My correction: then shall it be too late to knock when the door shall be shut; and too late to cry for mercy when it is the time of judgment." (*Commination Service.*) Then the veil of indifference will be drawn aside, and they will curse their folly, which has brought them to this state. All the workings of God's Holy Spirit which they have resisted—all the means of Grace which they mocked at and turned into ridicule—while they trusted that to-morrow

should be as this day, and much more abundant—will now rise up in condemnation against them.

Oh ye, that are living careless, godless lives now, take warning while you have the opportunity. Take warning by the dying sinner's death-bed; hear his shrieks for mercy when he can no longer hide from his eyes the dread future that awaits him. Take warning, unbelievers, for you have no excuse. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handiwork." "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead." (Rom. i. 20.)

If you think solemnly at all you must see a higher power overruling all things. Thou must acknowledge that "verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth,"—and because now thou mightest see the wicked flourish, and violence and oppression go undiscovered, yet think not it will always remain so, for all is known and recorded against the great day of judgment, when the Lord shall render to every man according to his works:—"To them who by

patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath." (Rom. ii. 7, 8.)

Oh ye, who until now have set at nought all God's mercy and longsuffering, who have harassed and troubled the children of God, think of the awful future that awaits you unless you repent—when Lazarus shall be carried into the bosom of Abraham, and thou, thyself, being in torments desire a drop of water to cool thy tongue. Oh, think of these things while there is yet time, that thy heart may be softened, and thou come in earnest contrition to Him, who alone hath power to forgive sins. That thou mayest knock at the door of God's mercy, and that it may be opened unto thee. Oh, flee from the wrath to come! Delay not one single day—think of all that is involved if thou still hardenest thy heart, for then thou must hear the sinner's doom as thy doom. But if thou hast lived in sin hitherto, recollect, that before thou canst enter heaven, thou must undergo a great change, "Ye must be born again." And despair

not, though at first thou mayest stumble ; but still persevere—still go on striving. Sorrow for past sin is the first step towards repentance ; but prayer, earnest prayer, will be thy greatest help. And when thou art able to say, “I have found pardon and peace through the atoning blood of my Saviour,” then wilt thou wish that all that thou knowest should come unto “Him” also ; and as thou hast been forgiven much, so wilt thou love much, and be unwilling to lose one hour of thy precious time, counting that lost which is not spent in doing the Will of God, knowing that already thou hast lost so much.

“There are last that shall be first.” That thou mayest be of these few is the sincere prayer of the writer.

Oh, stop, poor sinner—stop and think
 Before you farther go ;
 Why will you sport upon the brink
 Of everlasting woe ?

