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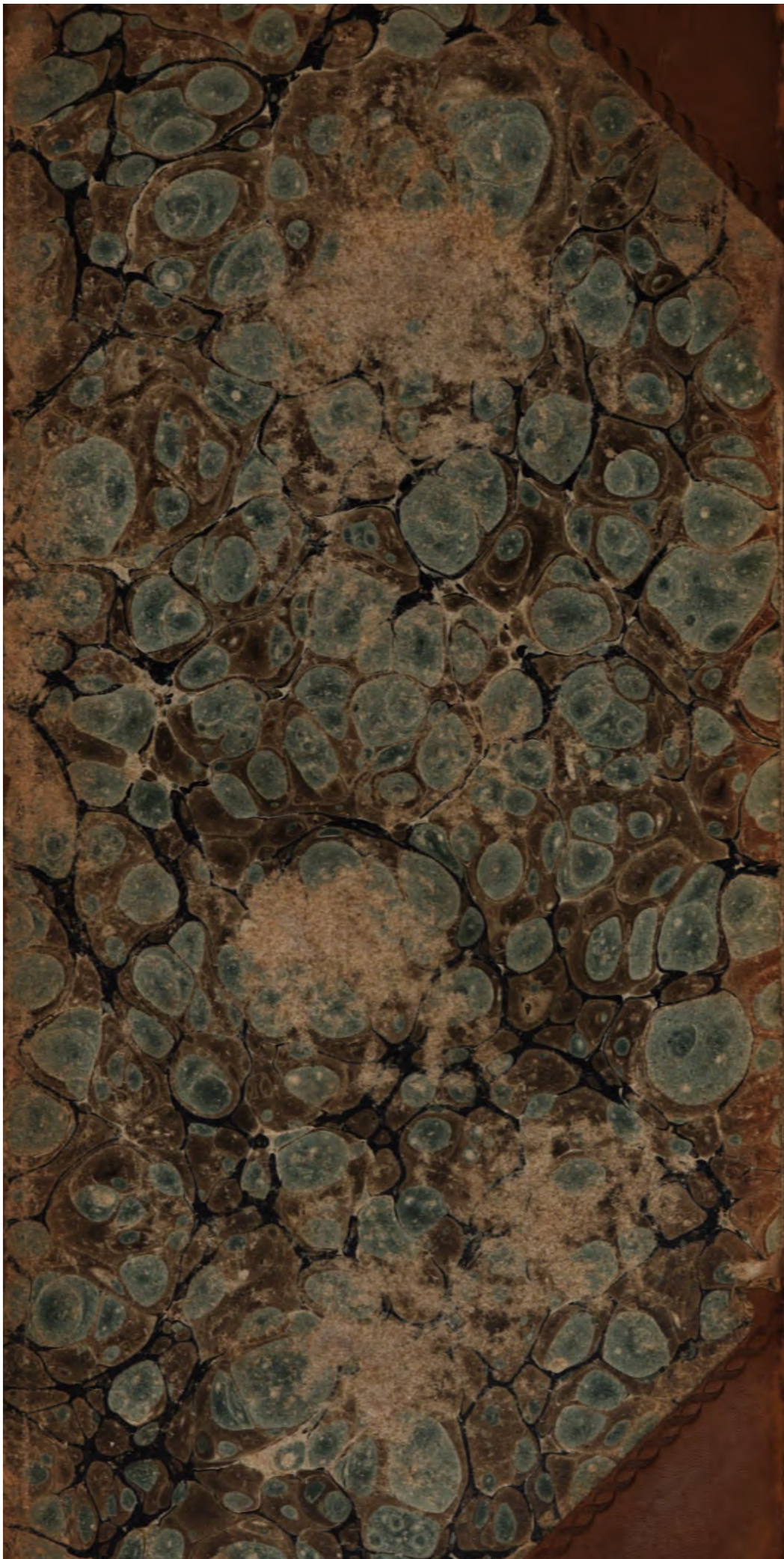
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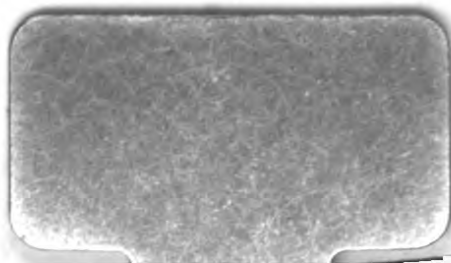
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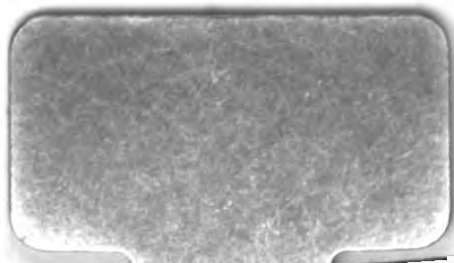






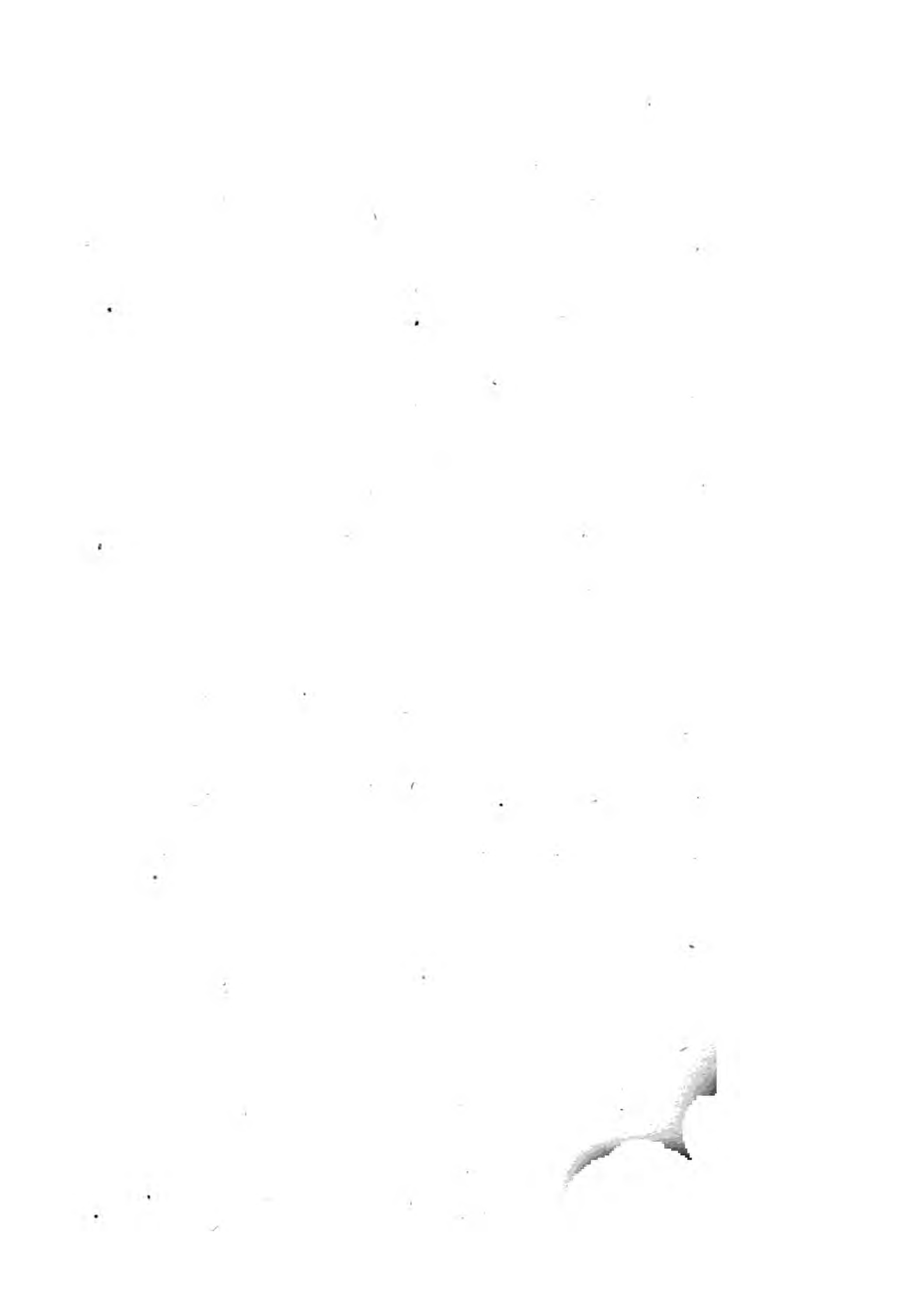
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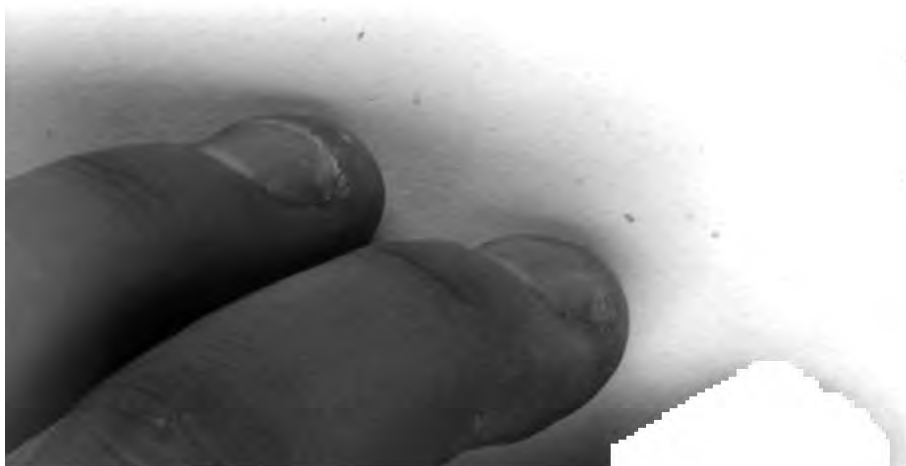








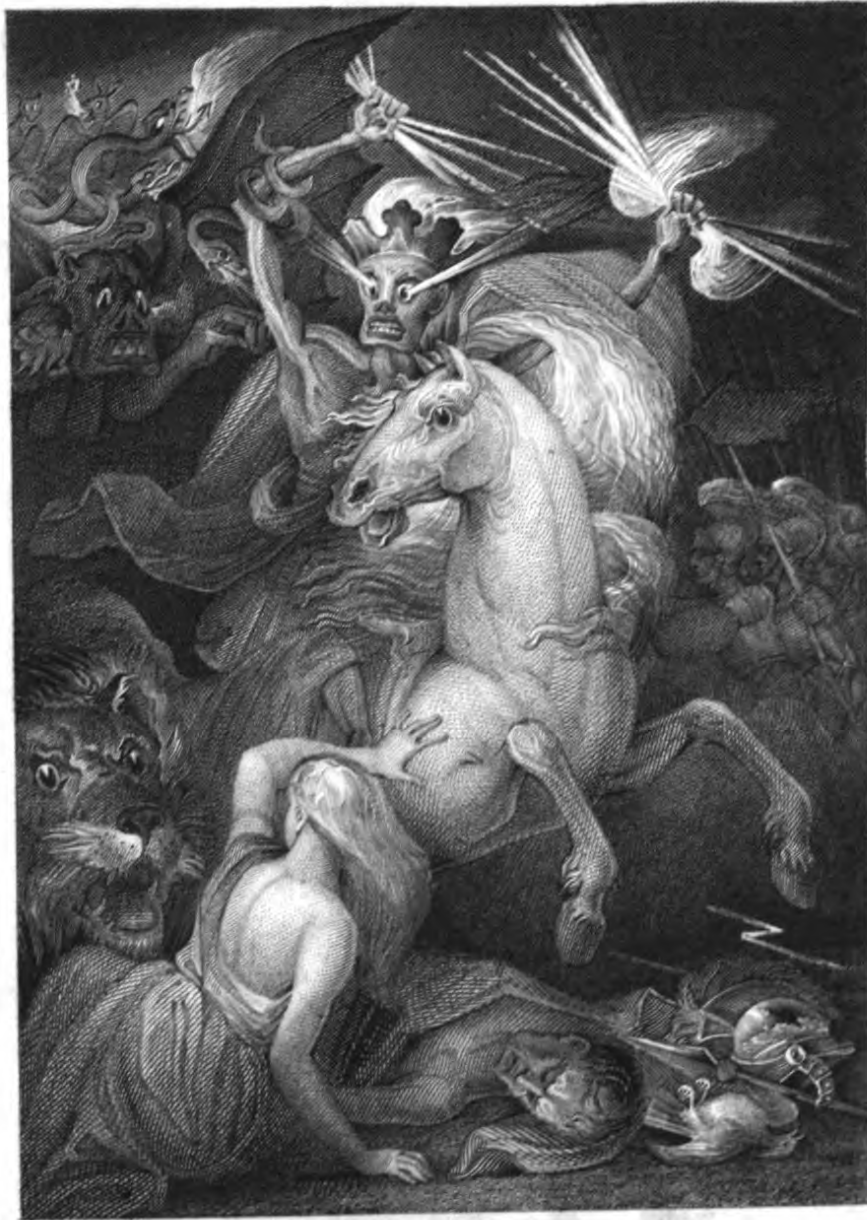




**Death on the Pale Horse.**







WILLM HEATH DELT

ENGRAVED BY J<sup>R</sup> ROBERTSON EDDI<sup>S</sup>

AND I LOCKED AND, BEHOLD, A PALE HORSE AND HIS NAME THAT SAT ON HIM WAS DEATH

REV CEAP C VFP R

L O N D O N

PUBLISHED BY WESTLEY & DAVIS & LONGMAN & CO

v. S. H. 1827.  
**DEATH** 134.

ON

# THE PALE HORSE.

BY JOHN BRUCE;

MINISTER OF THE LOW-HILL GENERAL CEMETERY, LIVERPOOL.

---

The other shape,—

If shape it might be call'd that shape had none,  
Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb;  
Or substance might be call'd that shadow seem'd;  
For each seem'd either;—black it stood as Night,  
Fierce as ten Furies, terrible as Hell,  
And shook a dreadful dart; what seem'd his head  
The likeness of a kingly crown had on.

MILTON.

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LONDON:

PUBLISHED BY WESTLEY & DAVIS, STATIONERS' COURT;  
AND LONGMAN & CO., PATERNOSTER ROW.

1827.

131.



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D. Marples, Printer,  
Liverpool.

## ADVERTISEMENT.

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MANY years ago, when the Author was on a visit to the metropolis, he first saw the celebrated Painting of WEST—DEATH ON THE PALE HORSE. “The general effect proposed to be excited by the Picture is the terrible sublime, and its various modifications, until lost in the opposite extremes of pity and horror.” Such was certainly the impression produced on the Author’s mind; and while his imagination was powerfully at work, he more immediately turned his attention to that awful part of the Apocalyptic vision, from whence the Artist had taken his subject. Not long after, in improving the death of a friend to a crowded assembly, he made it the theme of discourse.

This discourse, having subserved the design for which it was written, was laid aside, and



would, probably, have never emerged from its hiding-place, had it not been that the preacher, in consequence of a long cessation from pastoral duties, occasioned by severe indisposition, was induced to seek an occupation of his leisure hours in a pursuit which might be beneficial to his own heart, and ultimately serviceable in promoting that cause, the interests of which he had no longer the strength publicly to plead and defend. His own deep affliction—his desire to bring his mind into an habitual contemplation of an event which might not be far distant—and his conviction that no subject was more calculated to arrest the attention and impress the heart of the reader, should he be spared to finish the manuscript—decided at once that the sketch which he had drawn out of *Death on the Pale Horse*, should form the basis of his future meditation and inquiries.

Alas ! little did the writer think, at that time, that the Father of spirits, by thus secretly disposing his heart, was graciously preparing him for a series of events fearfully solemn and painfully interesting. He had not proceeded far in completing his intended work—he had scarcely

finished the Chapter entitled *Death, terrific in his aspect*—before the affliction under which he had laboured was suddenly brought to an alarming crisis, and for many days his life seemed tremblingly to vibrate between both worlds. At the same time, an *only* child, endeared by all those qualities of heart and mind which formed the buds of future promise—just rising into companionship—securing the confidence, drawing forth the sentiments, and engaging the affections, of her parents—like an opening flower, with a worm at its root, began to droop and languish from the effects of a slowly wasting consumption. And while the father was returning from the borders of the grave, he was called, in the exercise of deepest sympathy, to accompany his beloved daughter through the valley of the shadow of death, and by his conversations and prayers to strengthen her faith, and secure her hope, in the atoning sacrifice and revealed character of Him who is “the first-born from the dead,” and has the dominion of the unseen world.

Ever since the mournful hour which separated from the Author this interesting companion of

his earthly sojourn, his thoughts, awake or asleep, in company or alone, have mainly flowed in one channel. And while he desires to cherish a spirit of lowliest submission to the divine will, and to place the most unlimited confidence in the wisdom, and even the benevolence, of God, he wishes to bear along with him through life that vivid impression of invisible and eternal realities which the event has produced on his mind, as the best safeguard from the ensnaring influence of the world, as the most powerful incentive to a holy life, and the surest preparation for a peaceful, if not a triumphant death. His present situation—into which, unsought by him, he has been providentially led, as Minister of the Liverpool General Cemetery—has brought the scenes of death daily before his eyes. In the course of a few months he has seen nearly six hundred of his fellow-creatures carried to their long home, and has sympathized with, and addressed, many thousands of mourning spectators. He has witnessed death in all its various forms, and under all possible circumstances, and is only surprised that an event so common, and so deeply interesting, should leave so transient an impression on the hearts of

multitudes. In this situation, and with these scenes before him, he has finished the manuscript, and prepared for its publication.

The subject is confessed by all to be one of *anful* interest. If men are to be awakened from that state of insensibility into which sin has thrown them ; if an apprehension of danger is to be excited in their bosoms, and an earnest cry for mercy wrung from their hearts ; if they are to be led in search of a refuge from the storm of divine wrath, and to a joyful acceptation of the hope that is set before them ; if their ardour in pursuit of the world is to be checked, and their corroding anxiety subdued ; these ends are most likely to be effected when they feel “ the powers of the world to come.” When our Lord taught the multitude the first principles of his spiritual kingdom, he presented the truths which he inculcated in a double blaze of light—between the ineffable glories of the one world, and the fiery billows of the other. Although surpassing meekness, and melting compassion, were the most striking features in the character of this Teacher sent from God, yet many of his discourses contain the most vivid representations of

invisible and eternal things, the most pungent appeals to the conscience, and the most awakening exhortations to flee from the wrath to come. Few religious instructors, perhaps, have succeeded to any extent, who have not often touched those master-springs of the human mind—*fear* and *hope*. While the Author has laboured to produce this effect, he trusts that all his statements will be found to bear the character of ETERNAL TRUTH. He has endeavoured to benefit persons of all ages, and of different degrees of Christian experience; but he has especially kept in view the awakening of the careless, and the moral improvement of the young. To those who are in affliction, or who are mourning the loss of friends, and to whom the world has lost much of its attraction, he hopes that his little work may be an acceptable present. He commends it to the candid perusal of the reader, and the blessing of God.

LIVERPOOL,  
JANUARY, 1827.

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# DEATH

## ON THE PALE HORSE.

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### INTRODUCTION.

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THE Holy Scriptures are a revelation of those truths which could never have been apprehended by unassisted reason. They propose to our understandings facts and doctrines the most sublime and interesting that can occupy the attention of the human mind; they unfold a system of moral government the most equitable in its requirements, and awful in its sanctions; they exhibit a plan of redeeming and sanctifying mercy admirably adapted to meet our necessities as apostate and guilty creatures; and they afford to the weakest believer the richest consolations, and the most animating promises, under all the trials of life, and in the prospect of death and eternity. Many of the truths, however, which are made known to us in the Sacred Oracles are so entirely unseen, and so difficult of comprehension, by beings accustomed to receive their notices of things through



the medium of the senses, that the Holy Spirit, in condescension to our infirmities, has illustrated the nature of Christ's spiritual kingdom on earth, and the invisible realities of another world, by metaphors taken from the material universe with which we are surrounded. Hence, a great part of the language of Scripture is symbolical and figurative. All sensible objects, from the sun, that glorious luminary that traverses and adorns the heavens, to the insignificant seed that lies buried beneath the clods of the earth, are seized upon, and employed to give *substance* to invisible things, and *presence* to distant realities.

When Jesus Christ, that great Teacher sent from God, became an inhabitant of earth, and exercised his public ministry among men, he explained the great principles of his spiritual empire, and unveiled the hidden glories of the one world, and the torments of the other, in a style of language most calculated to arrest the attention, inform the understanding, and interest the heart. "He spake to the multitude in parables:" and so generally was this the case, that the Evangelist adds, "without a parable spake he not unto them." By objects in nature with which the senses are familiar; by an allusion to the customs and manners of the country in which they resided; by a touching appeal to the several relations which constitute the bond and charm of social

life; and by the local scenery with which they were surrounded; this incomparable Instructor enlightened the ignorant, reclaimed the vicious, and convinced the sceptic. This mode of instruction has many advantages; and that it should have been adopted by Infinite Wisdom is proof of its intrinsic excellence. By interesting the imagination, it seizes and keeps alive the attention; it conveys a truth into the mind before passion or prejudice is raised against it; and, by simplifying the most abstruse and difficult subjects, it renders them easy of comprehension to the meanest capacity. It invests the spiritual world with all that is grateful to the taste, captivating to the ear, beautiful to the eye, and fragrant to the smell: and then it leads us on to anticipate a state of excellence as far beyond all this, as the substance to the shadow, as the momentous reality to the ideal vision.

The communications which were made to the prophets, and which they were required to deliver to others for their instruction, warning, or encouragement, were principally by appropriate and significant symbols. Either in dreams or visions, certain pictures or images were presented to the mind, strikingly illustrative of the facts which the Deity purposed to reveal. When the communication was intended to be obscure, the imagination of the prophet was strongly excited, leaving so

vivid an impression of the whole scene as to enable him to record it; while, perhaps, he himself might see but dimly, or not at all, the specific objects to which it referred. On the other hand, when the communication was intended to be clear and comprehensible, the rational faculty of the prophet was kept alive, amid the scenic representations which were created in the fancy, and so powerfully influenced by the Spirit of God as to enable him to understand, and intelligibly to explain, what would otherwise be dark and mysterious. In general, the prophecies of these holy men were delivered as they were received, in similitudes and allegories, sometimes explained, and often left in obscurity.

The writer has made these remarks in order to introduce to the notice of the reader the subject of the following Treatise. It is a strongly figurative representation of death; and as it conveys to the mind truths of the deepest interest, it cannot fail to arrest the attention, and impress the heart.

Revelations vi. 7, 8.

AND WHEN HE HAD OPENED THE FOURTH SEAL, I HEARD THE VOICE OF THE FOURTH BEAST SAY, COME AND SEE. AND I LOOKED, AND BEHOLD A PALE HORSE: AND HIS NAME THAT SAT ON HIM WAS DEATH, AND HELL

FOLLOWED WITH HIM. AND POWER WAS GIVEN UNTO THEM OVER THE FOURTH PART OF THE EARTH, TO KILL WITH SWORD, AND WITH HUNGER, AND WITH DEATH, AND WITH THE BEASTS OF THE EARTH.

The extraordinary book, of which these words are a part, is a prophecy of the various dispensations of God among men, from the first introduction of the gospel to the final consummation of all things. It was revealed to John, the venerable and beloved Apostle, when banished to the Isle of Patmos, by the Emperor Domitian, "for the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ." There appeared to him in vision a throne set in heaven; and he that sat on it was to look upon like a jasper, and a sardine stone; and a rainbow—the sweet emblem of peace and reconciliation—was round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald; and he held in his hand a roll of seven sheets of parchment, each of which was sealed. Of the ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, of whom the vast assembly was composed, and who stood around the throne in silent adoration; there was none found worthy to open the book, and loose the seals thereof. The Apostle, anxious to look into the folded leaves, and penetrate the secret purposes of the Almighty, wept; till, at length, his mourning was turned into joy, when he saw, in the midst

of the elders, a Lamb as it had been slain, who advanced, and took the book out of the right hand of him who sat on the throne, brake the seals, and unrolled the parchments. The success of this illustrious personage occasions loud acclamations of thanksgiving; a new song is sung in celebration of his surpassing worth, accompanied by harps, and golden vials full of odours. The book being opened, John is now invited to come and see; when, instead of the parchments being written, each contained separate figures, in the form of hieroglyphics, descriptive of the various events which should transpire in the church and the world. The first exhibited the figure of a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer. This was beautifully emblematical of the purity and excellence of the gospel; and, more especially, of its triumphant progress in the first ages of Christianity. The second contained the figure of a red horse—the natural symbol of war, and which referred to a period signalized in history for acts of cruelty and bloodshed, when vast numbers were slain under circumstances of peculiar atrocity. The third presented the figure of a black horse—the emblem of famine: and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand, intimating that, during this period of scarcity, the necessaries of life should be dealt out by weight and measure; which was

actually the case during the reigns of the Antonines. And, on the breaking of the seal, and the unfolding of the fourth parchment, appeared a pale horse, and his name that sat on him was **DEATH.**

This figure was the emblem of great mortality. Hades, or the world of departed spirits,\* followed in his train, claiming the most precious part of his spoils as her own, and exulting in the fresh

\* The Greek word which our translators have rendered Hell, is *Hades*, and it invariably signifies the unseen world. It is often used indefinitely, and will apply either to the invisible state of the righteous or wicked, immediately after death. In this sense I have considered the expression, and am sanctioned by the opinion of some of our ablest commentators. See Dr. CAMPBELL'S Sixth Preliminary Dissertation, Part ii.; Dr. DWIGHT'S System of Theology, Ser. clxiv.; and PETERS on Job. The judicious HOWE thus expresses his opinion: "Hades literally signifies only what we see not, or what is out of sight. But as the word of which it is compounded signifies only to know, as well as to see, it may further signify, that state of things which lies without the compass of our knowledge, even out of the reach of our mortal sight; or concerning which, though we are to believe what is revealed, we cannot immediately or distinctly know it. The common use of the word has been very agreeable thereto, with writers of all sorts; that is, to signify indefinitely the unseen world; or the state of the deceased out of the world, who are, consequently, gone out of our sight, whether they were good or bad; so as not peculiarly to signify hell, or any place or state of torment, only." For further information on this subject, see HOWE'S Redeemer's Dominion over the Invisible World.

accessions which were daily made to her numbers. As the conquests of Death were extensive, so the instruments he employed were various. "And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth." The figure has an allusion to a dark and long period of the Roman history, when that empire was strangely convulsed by intestine commotions, and wasted by the intrigues and ambition of rival factions. Between the year one hundred and eighty, and two hundred and eighty-four, many adventurers were elevated and deposed, crowned and assassinated, in rapid succession, by a corrupt and insolent soldiery. "No less than twenty of these imperial pageants passed in procession during this century, besides an incredible number of pretenders, usurpers, and unsuccessful candidates, who aspired to the honours of royalty." It is unreasonable to suppose that these sudden and frequent changes in the state could have been effected without an immense sacrifice of human lives: and civil wars are always connected with those dreadful scourges of our species—famine and pestilence. Several Christian and Heathen writers, who flourished at the period to which allusion has been made, represent it as a time of awful calamity; and, in particular, they mention one pestilence that lasted fifteen years.

Although this part of John's vision primarily referred to the ravages made in the Western hemisphere, yet, it is strikingly illustrative of the reign of death, in general. To this application of the figure, the devout and serious attention of the reader is now earnestly invited. It is not without much solicitude, and many fervent prayers to God for the success of his undertaking, that the writer would proceed. He is anxious that a subject so deeply interesting to every human being, and with which our fairest visions on earth, and brightest hopes of eternity, are connected, may be seen in its most solemn aspects, and felt in all its importance. The sentence of death is passed on each of us; every moment we live is only a reprieve from the grave; and before we are aware, the summons of our departure may arrive. Nor let the reader sit down to the perusal of these pages without humbly imploring the God of all grace that he would impress his mind with serious thoughts of eternity, and induce him diligently to prepare for it. This world, at the best, is only a state of probation for another; and all its scenes and enjoyments are shifting and transitory. In heaven alone is the attainment of perfect happiness; and he is the wisest man who labours to secure the imperishable glories of immortality.

The seal is broken—the parchment is unrolled—and Death, riding on the pale horse, is the



figure presented to our view. An angel—nay, the eternal Son of God, invites us, “Come and see.”

## CHAPTER I.

---

### *Death—the Offspring of Sin.*

---

He my inbred enemy  
Forth issued, brandishing his fatal dart,  
Made to destroy: I fled, and cry'd out, Death!  
Hell trembled at the hideous name, and sigh'd  
From all her caves, and back resounded, Death.

\* \* \* \* \*

Meanwhile in Paradise the hellish pair  
Too soon arriv'd, Sin there in pow'r before,  
Once actual, now in body, and to dwell  
Habitual habitant; behind her Death  
Close following pace for pace, not mounted yet  
On his pale horse.

MILTON.

---

WHEN a mighty conqueror appears on the theatre of the world, obtaining martial glory by the boldness of his conceptions and the unrivalled success of his enterprises, we feel solicitous to trace back his origin, and to mark the stages of

his triumphant progress. Although the strength of his genius is expended in the work of human destruction, and the laurels which he gathers are still dripping with the blood of his species; although the furls of his banners are filled with the sighs of orphans and widows; and wasted fields, and cities in ruins, groan in the rear of his victorious troops; we cannot suppress the curiosity which leads us to inquire by what means he has obtained his superiority in military science, and risen to the rank which he holds among the destroyers of nations.

The conqueror whose character it is the intention of the writer to describe, and whose achievements he purposes to develop, has, for many ages, triumphed over successive generations of men. He has swept off the countless myriads who preceded us on the busy stage of life, and we ourselves must ere long submit to his iron sceptre, and be numbered with the slain. To trace back *his* origin, therefore, and mark the stages of *his* progress, is not a subject of mere curiosity, but highly beneficial in its tendency and results. As the reign of death has become universal, and its consequences are so momentous and awful, a serious review of his history is calculated to excite in us a holy hatred of sin, and the warmest gratitude to Him who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light.

The many evils which exist in the world, and of which individuals and communities are the subjects, are the necessary consequences of *sin*. The sad disorder which pervades the several faculties of the soul, beclouding the understanding, perverting the will, and alienating the affections; the changes which take place in our circumstances and connexions; the pains and diseases which agitate and riot on the human frame; the toils to which we are doomed, and the anxieties by which we are fretted; together with all the feuds and contentions which distract society; have their origin in the existence of moral evil. Of all the consequences of transgression, none, however, is so formidable as DEATH. It follows in the train of natural evils, and is the certain effect of depravity and guilt. When our first parents came from the hands of their Creator, they stood resplendent in all the beauties of conscious innocence, and primæval integrity. They inhabited a perfect paradise, filled with the most delicious fruits, and adorned with flowers of the brightest hue and sweetest fragrance. No cloud darkened their sky, nor disease infested their frame; nor did noxious vapour float in their atmosphere, nor pang of guilty remorse strike through their bosoms. While Eden bloomed around, and all nature was robed in the rich attire of perpetual summer, man himself bid fair for a happy immortality. Some have thought it probable that Adam and his pos-

terity were intended to fill up the chasm which was made in the heavenly world by the revolt of the fallen angels; and that, if they had stood in paradise, they would doubtless have been translated, one by one, into the upper kingdom, without passing through the stages of sickness, infirmity, and dissolution. Certain it is, that their mortality was part of the curse denounced, in consequence of transgression. When our great progenitor was shown the tree of knowledge of good and evil which stood in the midst of the garden, and, as a test of his obedience, was forbidden to pluck and eat of its fruit, it was said, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." No sooner was the penalty incurred, than the punishment was inflicted. From that very moment he felt the seeds of mortality germinating within him; he became the subject of pain, disease, and grief; and after the lapse of nine hundred and thirty years, his dust was mingled with that of righteous Abel's. Subsequent generations, standing to their father in a federal relation, became universally subject to the same law. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." "In Adam all die." "By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation." None are exempt; it is the common portal through which we must all pass, to scenes of immortal

blessedness, or of eternal misery. The grave is called our long home; the house appointed for all living: and the road that leads to it is said to be the way of all the earth. And so conscious are we of the certainty of this event, that we hesitate not to adopt the language of Job, "I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living. When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return."

It is probable that the sentence denounced on Adam, and which has passed on all his posterity, did not so much apply to his departure out of the world, as to the peculiar *mode* of that departure. If he had remained in a state of innocence, he might indeed have been removed to heaven; and yet it would have been without those nameless pains and sorrows, sicknesses and infirmities, which usually precede death; and those tormenting fears, and indescribable agonies, that often accompany it. It would have been an exchange of habitation—a leaving the lower for the upper kingdom, and yet not dying; a sudden and happy translation, like that of the saints who shall be found alive at the judgment of the great day. No sooner did our first parent fall, than he began to die: not only was his condition one of toil and suffering, but his frame became liable to disease and dissolution, while his immortal spirit was the

subject of guilty fears, and frightful forebodings. In that very day man was a mortal creature; the child of sorrow, and an heir of wrath; and the fair form which was the immediate workmanship of the Deity, and which he pronounced, on its first creation, "very good," was doomed to corruption and decay. And as sin increased, and every generation of men became more depraved, the effects of our apostacy were yet more apparent, in the certain advance of disease and death.

Death is frequently spoken of, in the Sacred Scriptures, as an effect of divine *anger*; and the consequence of *guilt*. Aaron and his sons are commanded certain observances, "that they bear not iniquity and die;" and the congregation of Israel are exhorted to keep certain ordinances, "lest they bear sin for it and die." We frequently read such phrases as "worthy of death," and "guilty of death;" and the Apostle tells us generally, that "the wages of sin is death." It has been by the infliction of death that God, in all ages, has given the strongest proofs of his anger. When he saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually, the Lord said, "I will destroy man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth

me that I have made them." The judgment was awful beyond all conception: the windows of heaven were opened, and the fountains of the great deep were broken up; and, with the exception of the family which the ark enclosed, all that had life were destroyed. When the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah was great, because their sin was very grievous, the Lord rained brimstone and fire out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground. Pharaoh and his hosts presumptuously tempted the anger of Jehovah; and they were drowned in the midst of the sea. Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire before the Lord; and there went out flames and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. Korah and his company disputed the divine mission of Moses and Aaron; and the ground clave asunder that was under them, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up. Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Ghost; and straightway they fell down at the Apostle's feet, signal monuments of the righteous indignation of Jehovah. The judgments which God brought on the wicked inhabitants of Canaan, and which he successively inflicted on the unbelieving Jews at different periods of their history, but especially at the destruction of their city and temple, were intended as a testimony of his displeasure against sin.



Indeed, the very light of nature, or tradition from ancient revelation; taught the heathen to conceive of death as an evidence of the divine anger. When Paul and his companions were shipwrecked on the island Melita, it is said, “ The barbarous people showed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the rain, and because of the cold. And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly; but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.”

The life of man was *shortened*, and brought within the limit of one hundred and twenty years; and afterwards it was still further reduced to the narrow term of threescore and ten, in consequence of the rapid increase of human depravity, and the alarming sum of human guilt. So long as wicked men were continued in existence, to a prolonged age; and so long as their bodily powers and

mental faculties retained, for centuries, their full force and vigour; they were enabled to study every refinement in vice, and to practise every species of impiety. The hope, too, of a long life seemed only to weaken their sense of moral obligation to their Creator, and embolden them in rebellion and crime. The history of the Old Testament contains many instances of the span of human life being yet further contracted, either in consequence of the general sinfulness of individuals, or as the result of particular acts of transgression. It is impossible to read the instructive history of the Jewish nation, and especially that of the kings of Israel and Judah, without being frequently presented with the fact, that the wicked live not half their days.

The ravages which Death makes on *infants*, is another proof that it is the offspring of original sin. Who, that has been the mother of a helpless babe, has not often had her heart wrung with anguish to hear its pitiful cries, unable to tell the cause of its sufferings, and consequently unable to administer relief? To what innumerable diseases are these innocent little creatures subject, attended with the most excruciating pains? For many months they seem to live a kind of dying life; the fond parents, all the while, exercised by alternate fears and hopes. Notwithstanding the unremitting attentions of truly

affectionate friends to their health and comfort, many are snatched away by the hand of Death, and their ashes are mingled with the silent dust. They spring up like summer flowers, that open to us their beautiful tints for a few suns, and then droop and wither.

There is a mystery thrown around the death of infants which, in vain, we attempt to penetrate. That so large a proportion of the human race should be brought into the world, to suffer, to weep, and to die, is a difficulty in the plan of the divine government, of which we can obtain no solution. It is, however, a standing proof of the doctrine of human depravity, and reads to us a practical comment on the exceeding sinfulness of sin: and while we see its sad effects in the sweet form of our babes, we are taught to anticipate our own dissolution, and seek an interest in the righteousness of the Saviour, through which even *they* must be delivered from the consequences of sin, and ransomed from the prison of the grave. Some parents, indeed, know the design of the painful dispensation; and in the death of the child that has been born unto them, they have been admonished of sin, and deeply humbled on account of it. It has awakened in their bosoms a sense of past transgression; led them with weeping and supplication to the cross of the Redeemer; and constrained them to look for that

happiness in the infinite Creator, of which they have been deprived in the creature. The bereavement has not been less pointedly felt than that which excited the strong emotions of the parental heart of David, when accompanied with the touching parable of Nathan, and its wise and pertinent application. And thus they have been made to suffer more, *relatively*, than if they themselves had been the victims of disease and death.

“ The thorn it was poignant, but precious to me,—  
’Twas the message of mercy,—it led me to thee.”

It is allowed, that children in the years of infancy are incapable of moral action, and cannot therefore suffer death as the result of their own actual sins. It is rather the consequence of that depraved nature with which they come into the world; the effect of our first father’s apostacy and guilt. To this the Apostle attributes it when he says, “ For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed where there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression.” If it be objected that God has a right to inflict a positive evil to procure a greater good, we should feel disposed strongly to question the correctness of the assumption, especially as he could, with equal ease, take those helpless babes to heaven, without

suffering the calamities of pain and death. It cannot be supposed that God would create so much misery, merely to compensate it by a higher and future enjoyment. And who would not deem it unequitable to be arraigned and punished as a criminal, although afterwards he might be rewarded as an honest man? “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” “Whoever perished being innocent? or when were the righteous cut off?”

There is *one* death which, on account of the peculiarity of its nature, and the importance of its results, continues to be the astonishment of heaven, and the wonder of earth — the death of JESUS CHRIST. Although a pattern of perfect innocence, and clear of all imputation of actual guilt, he was arraigned at the bar of Pilate, condemned as a common malefactor, agonized and expired on the accursed tree. He submitted to pain and suffering, ignominy and death, and was interred in the dark and solitary chambers of the grave; that he might illustrate the infinite evil and awful demerit of sin, make atonement for its guilt, repair the ruins, and restore the harmony, of the moral universe. Nor is there one station we can occupy, from which we may have such a view of the effects of the first offence, and the turpitude of every succeeding act of transgression, as the hill of Calvary.

What a view do these facts give us of the deep pollution, and infinite evil, of sin ! It has turned this world into a wide and spacious hospital, in every ward of which we see the halt and the blind, the sick and the dying. Instead of a blooming paradise of joy, there rises to our sight an Aceldama, a field of blood ; a Golgotha, a place of skulls. Every thing around us evinces the melancholy truth that the misery of man is great upon him. If, like Lot, we imagine that we have made choice of plains well watered every where, even as the garden of the Lord, the illusion is soon dispelled, by finding that they are infested with enemies, and that even here our comforts are ravaged, and our bliss impaired. Care lodges beneath the fretted roof ; and the gilded mansion is not less exempt from suffering than the humble cottage. The history of mankind, like Ezekiel's roll, is written within and without, with lamentations, and mourning, and woe.

Nor are natural evils, alas ! the only sad inheritance which sin has entailed on the human race. It has infected our moral constitution, and is the disease which, deeply seated in the heart, has impaired and perverted its noble powers—deranged and vitiated its tender passions. The soul, which was once the spring of holy affections and desires, and the object of divine complacency and delight, is now averse to the knowledge, obedience,

and love of the Great Supreme, and is exposed to the bitter reproaches of an accusing conscience, and the angry frown of an offended Judge. A state of strange insensibility has been induced to the paramount importance of eternal things; so that men, alive only to the perishing and unsatisfying pursuits of time, have neither taste nor ability to aim at "honour, glory, and immortality." And shall we still continue in league with this enemy to the divine government, and to human happiness? Can we carry the viper in our bosoms, and play at the hole of the cockatrice den? Shall we trifle with an evil which has marred the beauty, embittered the pleasures, and broken the harmony of this lower world; which has despoiled man of his original dignity, the divine image in which he was created, and left him a miserable outcast from paradise, bereft of all communion with God, and enjoyment of his favour; which dissolves the tenderest ties and dearest bonds of social life, lessening the number of our living friends, and peopling the dreary mansions of the dead; and which has infested the body we inhabit with acute and loathsome diseases, and doomed it to corruption, worms, and earth? Rather, let us avoid the very appearance of evil, hating even the garments spotted by the flesh, and watching against all those circumstances which may prove occasions, or temptations to sin. And deeply sensible of the

depravity of our hearts, and the pollution of our nature, may we earnestly pray for the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit; and apply, by faith, to "the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness."

"Great God! how awful is the scene!  
A breath, a transient breath, between,  
And can I trifle life away?  
To earth, alas! too firmly bound,  
Trees deeply rooted in the ground  
Are shiver'd, when they're torn away!

Vain joys, which envied greatness gains,  
How do ye bind with silken chains,  
Which ask immortal strength to break!  
How with new terrors have ye arm'd  
That power, whose slightest glance alarm'd!  
How many deaths of one ye make!

Yet, dumb with wonder, I behold  
Man's thoughtless race, in error bold,  
Forget, or scorn, the laws of death;  
With these no projects coincide,  
Nor vows, nor toils, nor hopes, they guide—  
Each thinks he draws immortal breath!

Yet a few years, or days perhaps,  
Or moments, pass in silent lapse,  
And time to me shall be no more;  
No more the sun these eyes shall view;  
Earth o'er these limbs her dust shall strew;  
And life's fantastic dream be o'er.

Alas, I touch the dreadful brink!  
From nature's verge impell'd I sink!  
And gloomy darkness wraps me round!



26 DEATH—THE OFFSPRING OF SIN.

Yes!—death is ever at my hand,  
Fast by my bed he takes his stand,  
And constant at my board is found!

But then, this spark that warms, that guides,  
That lives, that thinks—what fate betides?  
Can this be dust?—a kneaded clod!  
This yield to death! the soul, the mind,  
That measures heaven, and mounts the wind,  
That knows at once itself and God!

Great cause of all, above, below,—  
Who knows Thee, must for ever know  
Thou art immortal and divine!  
Thine image on my soul imprest,  
Of endless being is the test,  
And bids eternity be mine!

Transporting thought! but am I sure  
That endless life will joy secure?—  
Joys only to the just decreed!—  
The guilty wretch, expiring goes  
Where vengeance endless life bestows,  
That endless misery may succeed!"

## CHAPTER II.

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*Death—divinely commissioned.*

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Chain'd to his throne a volume lies,  
With all the fates of men,  
With ev'ry angel's form and size  
Drawn by th' eternal pen.  
His providence unfolds the book,  
And makes his counsels shine :  
Each opening leaf, and ev'ry stroke,  
Fulfils some deep design.  
Not Gabriel asks the reason why,  
Nor God the reason gives ;  
Nor dares the fav'rite angel pry  
Between the folded leaves.

WATTS.

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THE dominion of Jehovah is universal and absolute, extending to all creatures and all events ; and while it is uncontrolled and sovereign, it is exercised on principles of wisdom, equity, and benevolence. Every thing which occurs in the

world, in the ordinary course of providence, is either appointed, or permitted, by the Almighty. He orders the successive returns of seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, day and night. The elements of nature feel his hand, and obey his voice. “Fire and hail, snow and vapour, and stormy wind, fulfil his word.” “He hath set bars and doors to the sea, and saith, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.” He is Governor among the nations, sits at the helm of universal empire, and worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. “There are many devices in a man’s heart, but the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand.” The extent and continuance of our possessions and connexions are subject to the divine determination. “The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.” To-day we are surrounded with friends, and favoured with the advantages of social life; to-morrow we sit alone as a pelican in the wilderness, or as a sparrow on the house-top. He knows every pain which we feel, and measures the portion of our sufferings. “Thou feedest them with the bread of tears; and givest them tears to drink in great measure.” And he “fixes the bounds of our habitation, that we cannot pass.”

The disposal of life, also, is claimed by Jehovah

as his own prerogative. "See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no God with me. I kill, and make alive; I wound, and I heal; neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand." He is called "the God of the spirits of all flesh;" "the God in whose hands our breath is." The royal Psalmist assures us that "unto God, the Lord, belong the issues from death;" and Moses, on a review of the numbers of the children of Israel who had died in the wilderness, thus acknowledges the divine agency: "Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men." The Saviour himself proclaims, "I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

Keys are the insignia of office, and when in the hands of our divine Mediator, they signify his absolute authority, and universal dominion. The government of the church, as committed to the Apostles, is expressed by giving them "the keys of the kingdom of heaven:" and when it was predicted of Eliakim that he should be empowered to exercise ministerial rule in the court of Hezekiah, it was promised, "And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so that he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open." In his

epistle to the church at Philadelphia, the Redeemer applies this passage to himself, and adds, "Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." When, therefore, the Lord Jesus asserts that he has the keys of *hades*—the unseen world, and of death, he affirms his dominion over both worlds; *this* in which we live, and *that* into which we enter, on our departure hence. He is Lord both of the dead and of the living; guards the passages of both states, and governs their innumerable inhabitants; and none can cross the threshold of time, and enter the portals of eternity, without his appointment or permission.

It is objected that there are several passages of Scripture which seem to oppose this view of the subject, and make the life of man to depend on certain contingencies which are immediately under the control of the creature. While long life is promised to obedient children, and the fear of the Lord is said to prolong days, it is threatened that the years of the wicked shall be shortened, and that bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days. Expressions of this kind are intended to convey to us the sentiment, that it is the tendency of a vicious course of conduct to undermine the constitution, and lead to a premature death; and that early decided piety is the best preservative of health, and the surest pledge

of a happy old age. And yet we have known persons, whose principles have been long depraved, and whose habits have been proverbially vicious, spared to advanced age; while youth of considerable promise have been cut down in the flower of their years; and the recollection of their many opening virtues sheds a sweet and delicious fragrance over their tombs. So that whatever may be the natural tendency of a wicked, or a holy life, on our present destiny, neither the one nor the other can alter the arrangements of infinite Providence. To deny the immutability of the divine purposes, is to ascribe to the Deity imbecility and weakness—weakness, in arranging a plan so defective as to need alteration; and imbecility, in not being able to put it into execution. That it is difficult to reconcile the unchangeableness of the divine intentions with the liberty of the creature, is candidly acknowledged; and yet what God has revealed it is our duty to admit on his own authority. While he has declared that his counsels of old are immutably true, he has connected the means with the end, and has assured us that “*Godliness is profitable unto all things; having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.*”

Death, then, is the servant of the Most High, and every warrant which he executes he receives from the Sovereign of all worlds. He issues forth

at the divine command ; bears a commission impressed with the broad seal of heaven ; and before he can point an arrow, or fling a dart, he must have the permission of Him at whose girdle hang the keys of the unseen world. If all the movements of the last enemy were not immediately under the control of the Divine Being, the plans by which he governs the world would be necessarily defective ; and the uncertainty attendant on the destinies of individuals would derange the whole scheme of providence. How often is it the case that a nation's wealth and stability, or the rescue of an empire from civil anarchy, and its subsequent state of peace and aggrandisement, depend, humanly speaking, on the life of some grand mover, in the machinery of state ! If Alexander the Great had been strangled in his cradle, we should never have heard of those prodigies of valour which have emblazoned the page of history ; or, if Cæsar had perished when a youth, the Romans might never have reaped the advantages of an Augustan age. Of Cyrus, God had said, " He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure ; even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built, and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid ;" and yet, had Cyrus died before his accession to the throne of Babylon, the prediction would have been falsified, and the restoration of the Jews to the land of their fathers would have been prevented. The triumphs of the cross,

in the first age of Christianity, depended, for their agency, on the lives of the Apostles; and the reformation of the church from popery, on the watchful care which was exercised by Divine Providence over such men as Wickliffe and Luther. And does not the prosperity of families, and the increase of separate churches in numbers and in piety, hang on the valuable lives of some of their members?

The precise *time* of our departure is the result of a wise and irrevocable decree. "Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? are not his days, also, like the days of an hireling?" The sands in the hour-glass of life are all measured, and the moment they will cease to run is perceived by the eye of Omniscience. An event so solemn, and connected with such important consequences, is not left to mere casualty, or to fortuitous chance, but is the ordination of Infinite Wisdom. Our Lord informs his disciples, in general, that the Father "hath reserved the times and the seasons in his own power;" and Job, in a solemn address to God, says, "His days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass." "I trusted in thee, O Lord," says the Psalmist, "I said, thou art my God, my times are in thy hand." We shall live as long as the design of our being is accomplished, and, when



the hour of our departure arrives, neither the skill of art, nor the power of medicine, nor the change of climate, nor the soothing attentions of friends, can avail in delaying the execution of the sentence. The divine purpose, indeed, is concealed from us, and therefore we are justified in using all lawful means for the preservation of life; and to neglect the use of these means is to incur the guilt of self-destruction. Hezekiah is promised that his life should be prolonged fifteen years, and yet he is commanded to apply a lump of figs to the diseased part, in order that he may recover. And, while the Apostles are assured that the hairs of their head are all numbered, they are exhorted when persecuted in one city to flee unto another.

Death has a commission with regard to the *place* where we die. Some die surrounded by the comforts and conveniences of home, and have the pains of a sick-bed alleviated by the soothing attentions of disinterested friendship. Others die on a journey, or strangers in a strange land, without a relative to cheer their last expiring hours, or pay the common rites of decent burial. Terah left Ur of the Chaldees with Abraham his son, and Lot his son's son, and Sarah his daughter-in-law, with a view of settling in the land of Canaan; but before he reached the place of his destination he died in Haran, far distant

from the scenes of his youth, and the altars of his religious worship. Some die on land, and are buried in the sepulchres of their fathers; while others perish at sea, and are entombed in the bosom of the ocean. We have read of some highly favoured individuals, who, on their knees, and in the act of devotion, have received their summons into the immediate presence of Jehovah, and have exchanged at once the wailing of confession, and the earnest tone of supplication, for the song of joy, and the harp of praise. Dr. Conyers, a faithful and zealous clergyman, had frequently expressed the wish that he might terminate his days of usefulness in the pulpit, and the desire of his heart was given to him: such also was the privilege of Mr. Bowden, a respectable dissenting minister. Others, awful to relate! have been called from scenes of amusement and dissipation, and even from the haunts of impurity and vice, to render a strict account of their actions at the dread tribunal of their Judge. Oh, then, let us recollect that wherever we are, we may be on the confines of eternity! that the lonely field or the crowded city, the domestic fire-side or the busy exchange, may be the place of our dissolution. When we retire to rest, our slumbers may prove to be the sleep of death, and our bed may become our tomb; and when we go forth from our habitation in the morning, we may only visit it again to be dressed for our last narrow house.

How important then is habitual preparation for death! It is of little consequence *where* we die; but how inconceivably desirable that the soul should be fitted for the enjoyment of a blessed immortality, and that the body should slumber in the grave, in sure and certain hope of a resurrection to eternal life!

The *manner* of our death is also the subject of the divine determination. By far the greater part of mankind are taken away by slowly progressive and lingering diseases. Their passage to the tomb is gradually sloped before them; and from the commencement of their affliction to its close, they can say, "I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living." Some, however, are removed so suddenly as to oblige us to exclaim, "He passed away, and lo, he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found!" And of their bereaved families we say, "How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment, as a dream when one awaketh!" There are still others who meet with their death by one of those providential occurrences which happen out of the common course of nature. They neither sicken with disease, nor bend beneath the pressure of infirmity; but are cut off in the midst of their days by the hand of violence, or by, what the world calls, some sudden casualty. They go forth to their

labour in the morning, or industriously engage in their usual avocations and pursuits, and by some mysterious event in providence, are brought home, either emaciated in person, or cold and ghastly corpses. This is only a different mode of departure out of the world, and it is either permitted or appointed by Him who is excellent in counsel and wonderful in working. Whether we die in the land of peace, or amid the din of arms and garments rolled in blood; whether we perish by the devouring famine or the noisome plague; whether we are struck dead by the lightning's flash, or are torn in pieces by the wild beasts of the forest; whether we are engulfed in the waters, or consumed by the flames; these different creatures and elements are only agents in the hand of the Great Eternal. "A certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness: wherefore he said unto the driver of his chariot, Turn thine hand, and carry me out of the host, for I am wounded." This would be deemed by some one of the chances of war; but it was intended to fulfil the prophecy of Elijah, and as a punishment for the guilty temerity and wickedness of Ahab. "Is there evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" In reading the history of Josiah, a young prince of extraordinary excellence, who has not regretted the rashness which induced him to give battle to the king of Egypt,

and in consequence of which he was slain? and yet it was the fulfilment of the prophecy of Huldah. “Behold, therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place.” Before God punishes the Jews for their idolatries, he shelters his servant from the storm of his wrath, and calls him to a brighter crown, and a more enduring kingdom. Should the flames of persecution again be kindled, and should our chief magistrates say to us, as Pilate did to the Saviour, “Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?” we may with Him reply, “Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above.”

How does the belief of the sovereign and universal dominion of God dispose us to Christian submission, under the loss of our dearest earthly friends! When the objects of our tender love are removed from us, how consolatory the thought that the time of their departure, and all the means by which it was occasioned, were appointed and arranged by a Being of infinite wisdom and benevolence! We sometimes blame ourselves for negligences or mistakes, and we think if this plan had not been adopted, and the other had been pursued,—if we had been more

alive to the danger that threatened us, more wise in the selection of instruments, and more prompt in the use of efficient remedies,—our parent, our child, our brother, our friend, would not have died. But these are useless wailings—vain and foolish regrets! That we are liable to err cannot be denied; and that our errors sometimes hasten the event which we are most anxious to retard, is acknowledged; and yet we should not be slow to admit that the Supreme Arbiter of life and death renders even our short-sightedness subservient to the accomplishment of his own purposes. It is He that takes away the desire of our eyes with a stroke; that bereaves us of our children; that puts our acquaintance into darkness; and who hath broken us with breach upon breach. Much as we loved our friends, and bitter as the pang of separation has been to us, cutting asunder, as it were, the chords, and tearing away the fibres of the heart, we dare not question his right in them, nor murmur at the disposal which he makes of his own property. As the great Husbandman, he walks through the garden of the world, and plucks his flowers *when* and *where* he pleases; and if he gives them root in a richer soil, and causes them to expand and bloom in a more genial clime, have we not more occasion to adopt the song of grateful thanksgiving, than the un-availing expressions of sorrow! It is our privilege, as it is our duty, to adore the divine

sovereignty, and prostrating ourselves at his throne, from the heart to say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

Nor let us be unduly anxious about the term of our *own* life, or the circumstances of our death. If we are reconciled to God through the death of his Son; if sin be pardoned and the heart renewed; we may confidently commit the changes which may take place in the mode of our existence into His hands, the wheels of whose providence are full of eyes, and never move at random. Our great business should be the care of the soul; an attention to the discharge of present duty, and the improvement of present privileges; and to have a supreme regard in all that we do to the revealed will of God: and then we may cheerfully resign the disposal of the body, and of all our temporal interests, to Him, who has the management of the material universe, and with whom reside the spirits of just men made perfect. If all is safe for eternity, we may calmly wait our last summons; and when the messenger arrives, and the call is heard, we may tranquilly apprise our friends, "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good."

## CHAPTER III.

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*Death—certain in his approach.*

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Leaves have their time to fall,  
And flowers to wither at the north-wind's breath,  
And stars to set—but all,  
Thou hast *all* seasons for thine own, oh Death!  
Youth, and the opening rose,  
May look like things too beautiful for decay,  
And smile at thee—but thou art none of those  
Who wait the ripened bloom to seize their prey!  
We know when moons shall wane;  
When summer birds from far shall cross the sea;  
When autumn's hue shall touch the golden grain;  
But who shall teach us when to look for thee!

ANON.

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WHEN, in the height-day of youthful vigour, we are enchanted by scenes of earthly pleasure; or when, in advancing years, we are engrossed by the cares and businesses of the world; we are too apt to view death at a distance, and to treat with unconcern invisible realities. Most are



willing to confess the humiliating truth that they *shall* die; but, they think, not *now*: and, notwithstanding they daily see man going to his long home, and the mourners walking about the streets, they put far from them the evil time, vainly imagining that to-morrow will be even as to-day, and so much the more abundant. When pressed to an immediate attention to the care of the soul, from the consideration of the shortness and uncertainty of life, like the Israelites to whom Ezekiel prophesied, they say, “The vision that he seeth is for many days to come; and, he prophesieth of the times that are far off.” Vain thought! while we are supposing the grim tyrant to be afar, “Death is come up into our windows, and is entered into our palaces, to cut off the children from without, and the young men from the streets.” He is hourly stalking abroad through the earth, marking his victims, and securing his conquests. And while we are dreaming of years to come, and of plans of future wealth and pleasure, of enterprize and enjoyment, perhaps the recording angel is saying to us, “Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.”

Had we no other evidence than that of *analogy*, we should not be without a monitor of the sure approach of death. Every thing around us is subject to dissolution and decay. Mutability is

engraven, in deep and legible characters, on all the works of nature and of art with which we are familiar. Winter strips the earth of her rich dress of many colours, and the trees of their beautiful foliage. Where the scene teemed with life, and was decked with verdure, a field of desolation rises to the view. For many months a great part of the globe presents little else than a widely extended sepulchre, enclosing in her gloomy caverns the spoils of summer and the wreck of autumn. Those gaudy insects which expand their wings, and flutter in the beams of a noon-tide sun, gathering sweets from every leaf and every flower, having gaily spent the period of their short existence, construct for themselves a shell, in which they lie entombed, without the least trace of life, or promise of future resurrection. Time wears away the monumental brass, and crumbles the lofty pyramid into dust. "And surely the mountain falling cometh to nought, and the rock is removed out of his place. The waters wear the stones: thou washest away the things which grow out of the dust of the earth; and thou destroyest the hope of man." The seasons roll round; day merges into night, and the cheerful and luxuriant months of spring and summer are succeeded by the gloom and desolation of winter. The sun rises and sets; and the stars perform their nightly courses, and then give place to the dawn of morn. In the page of pro-

phesy we are led to anticipate a period when the very "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." And can we see the changes which are taking place around us, and not anticipate our own dissolution? Can we stand on moving sands, and find the foundation of all our earthly hopes give way, and yet imagine that *we* shall escape the common wreck of nature? "Thou prevailest for ever against him, and he passeth: thou changest his countenance, and sendest him away."

We are not left, however, to deduce the fact of our mortality from analogy, but have the positive testimony of divine revelation. It was the sentence pronounced upon Adam, and, through him, on all his posterity: "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." "Who is he that liveth, and shall not see death; shall he free his soul from the power of the grave?" "It is appointed unto all men once to die." "For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground, yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant. But man dieth and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost,

and where is he? As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up; so man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep." The brief and simple annals of those who lived under the patriarchal and and jewish economies are generally concluded by the emphatic expression, " he died." Such is the end of all men, and the living ought to lay it to heart.

Besides these testimonies of our mortality, which are direct and positive, the Scriptures generally compare human life to objects which are the most frail and perishing, or the most vain and fleeting. It is a blade of grass, a flower, a leaf; which are subject to innumerable casualties, and liable, every moment, to be blighted and destroyed. If the grass escapes the tooth of those useful animals by which our labour is diminished, or our lives sustained, it either falls beneath the mower's hand, or is scorched and consumed by the beams of a meridian sun. Our green fields soon lose the fresh and beautiful hue on which the eye delights to repose, and are turned into a brown and fruitless desert. Still more transient is the *flower*, which perfumes and ornaments the wilds of nature, or the garden of art. We walk abroad, and are delighted and regaled with the beauty and fragrance of these inimitable produc-

tions of the skill and goodness of the Almighty. And yet, when we examine their nice formation, the slender stem by which they are supported, the extreme delicacy of their fibres, and the manner in which they receive their nourishment; and when we reflect on the countless accidents to which they are exposed; we feel sensible that they are produced only to adorn our plantation, and gratify our senses, for a season. In a few days, these exquisite specimens of infinite contrivance, droop, and wither, and die. The *leaf* is yet more frail than the flower. It is more liable to be broken off from its parent stock by the winds of heaven, and to be trampled in the dust by the foot of the careless passenger. Thus frail and perishable, in his best estate, is man! “We all do fade as the leaf, and our iniquities like the wind do carry us away.” “The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass.”\*

\* I cannot refrain from transcribing the following beautiful passage, from the inimitable writings of Bishop JEREMY TAYLOR, as illustrative of the observations which have just been made. In reading this celebrated author, one cannot but regret that while his compositions possess great strength and beauty, his statements of the great essentials of Christian doctrine are frequently very defective. “It is a mighty

Human life is also compared to a summer's flood, which, as it is not fed by living springs, but is produced only by sudden and heavy falls of rain, soon spends itself, or mingles with the ocean: to a cloud, which is quickly borne by the winds from one end of heaven to the other: to a shadow, which is an imperfect image of the substance, and so evanescent and fleeting as scarcely to be visible many moments together: to a vapour, which appeareth for a little while, and

change that is made by the death of every person; and it is visible to us who are alive. Reckon but from the sprightliness of youth, and the fair cheeks and full eyes of childhood, from the vigorousness and strong flexure of the joints of five and twenty, to the hollowness and dead paleness, to the loathsomeness and horror, of a three days' burial, and we shall perceive the distance to be very great and very strange. But so have I seen a rose newly springing from the clefts of its hood, and at first it was fair as the morning, and full with the dew of heaven as a lamb's fleece; but when a ruder breath had forced open its virgin modesty, and dismantled its too youthful and unripe retirements, it began to put on darkness, and to decline to softness, and the symptoms of a sickly age; it bowed the head and broke its stalk, and at night, having lost some of its leaves and all its beauty, it fell into the portion of weeds and outworn faces. The same is the portion of every man and every woman; the heritage of worms and serpents, rottenness and cold dishonour, and our beauty so changed that our acquaintance quickly know us not; and that change mingled with so much horror, or else meets so with our fears and weak discouragements, that they who six hours ago tended upon us, either with charitable or ambitious services, cannot, without some regret, stay in the room alone where the body lies, stripped of its life and honour."

then vanisheth away. Our days are swifter than a post, that moves rapidly from one city to another, pressed by the importance of the intelligence it conveys: they pass away like the swift ships, which, noble and majestic as they appear when near to the shore, soon become as a speck on the ocean, and are quickly carried out of sight: they are spent as a tale that is told,—an entertaining story, which excites the imagination, and beguiles the passing hour, so that it seems to be at an end almost as soon as begun, and to have communicated little that is worth remembrance: they move on with the rapidity of a weaver's shuttle; or, of the flight of an eagle, when darting on his prey.

If life itself is compared to objects which are the most frail and perishing, or the most vain and fleeting, the *body*, which is the vehicle of life, is described by metaphors which convey to us the idea of its mortality. It is a tabernacle; the earthly house of our tabernacle: as a shepherd's tent; of which the immortal soul is the noble inhabitant. The tabernacles or tents of the ancients were constructed of very rude and slender materials. They usually consisted of pieces of canvas stretched on poles, and tied down with cords to wooden pins driven into the ground. As these temporary dwellings could be taken down, and removed at pleasure, they were

convenient to travellers, and to those who followed the pastoral life. Such is the residence of man! It is a curious structure,—a noble specimen of the skill and contrivance of the Almighty. When we consider its formation, the variety of its parts, their surprising adaptation to the unity and perfection of the whole, and their fitness for the performance of the functions of animal life, we involuntarily exclaim, with the Psalmist, “ I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.” And yet although the human frame is of exquisite workmanship, it is composed of the meanest materials. The house of which we are the tenants, is, at the best, an *earthly* house, for the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground; and when he pronounced sentence on his transgression, he commanded him to return unto the ground whence he was taken. This is our common origin, however we may boast of the line of our ancestry, or the dignity of our birth. And as our earthly tenement is composed of mean materials, so it is easily deranged, and of



short and uncertain duration. Like the tents of Eastern shepherds, it is liable to injury from accident or weather, and to be thrown down, or rent in pieces, by every gust of wind.

Nor need we be pressed with proof on a subject which is confirmed by every man's observation and experience. How many, of all ages, and under all circumstances, are removed from life's busy scene, into a boundless eternity. The solemnities of death, and the pomp of funeral rites, are daily striking our senses. The window closed against the light of heaven; the watchers dressing the pale corpse for his last resting place, and strewing his shroud with sweet smelling flowers and sprigs of evergreen; the stillness which pervades the house of mourning, save when it is broken by the heart-rending sighs of bereaved relatives; the mutes, with their weepers, keeping sentry at the door; the busy gravedigger, with his mattock and his spade, following, day by day, his sad occupation; the slowly moving hearse, the nodding plumes, the passing knell, and the opening grave; these are scenes and circumstances with which the mind has become familiar. If we enter the Christian sanctuary, we meet, at the same altar, the widow in her weeds; the father mourning the loss of his child; the sisters exclaiming, in the bitterness of their grief, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my

brother had not died;" and the helpless orphan, raising his tearful eye to heaven, and praying, My father, wilt thou not, from this time, become the guide of my youth. There are few families that have not been visited by the stroke of death; and still fewer habitations where there is no chamber that calls to the remembrance of survivors the last agonies of a departed relative. We ourselves are the tenants of frail tabernacles, easily shattered by accident, or taken down and removed. We dwell in houses of clay, our foundation is in the dust, and we are crushed before the moth. The ravages which disease has already made in our constitutions, and the pains and infirmities of which we are the subjects, remind us that the day is not far distant, when we shall lie down in the dust, and sleep sweetly beneath the clods of the valley.

The patriarchs were often reminded that their residence on earth was only a state of temporary sojourn. Their occupation being entirely pastoral, and their substance chiefly consisting in herds of cattle and flocks of sheep, verdant meadows and wells of water were absolutely necessary to their subsistence and prosperity: and as herbage in the East is of short duration, and the springs soon exhausted, they were often obliged to remove from one part of the country to another. To facilitate this object, their houses were so

constructed as to be taken down with ease, and put together on any emergency. A mode of life so uncertain and wandering, was doubtless designed to teach them that here they had no abiding place; and to engage them, with earnestness and perseverance, in the pursuit of an inheritance which time cannot ravage, nor death destroy. In every vicissitude they would hear a voice powerfully urging them, "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest." "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country."

Death is certain, because *necessary* to introduce the good and bad into their different states of rewards and punishments. Here "all things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked." Were we to judge of character from the station which men occupy, and the outward ease with which they pass through life, we should often be mistaken as to the favourites of heaven. Those whose principles are the most erroneous, and whose practices are the most depraved, often ride on the high places of the earth, and glitter in the sun-beam of prosperity; while others, who have been renewed in

the spirit of their minds, and bring forth the fruits of righteousness, are to be sought in the lowly vale, drinking the full cup of sorrow, and struggling with the griping hand of poverty. The world, like mystic Babylon, is clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls; while the church, like Israel in Egypt, are made to serve with rigour, and their journey through the wilderness is one of self-denial and danger. Vice frequently goes unpunished, and virtue unrewarded; so that the principles on which the divine government is administered, are not always apparent in the present state. This is the scene of combat and of trial: the dawn of eternity is to usher in the day of final retribution. All the disorders which now exist in society will then be rectified; the mysteries of providence will be unfolded; and men shall be judged and rewarded according to their works. She who lived deliciously, shall have so much torment and sorrow: and because she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, therefore shall her plagues come in one day—she shall be utterly burned with fire: while through every street, and from every mansion of the Holy City, a great voice of much people shall be heard, “Alleluia; salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God.”

When a celebrated warrior, flattered on occasion of a splendid triumph, was asked, "What is wanting here?" he replied, CONTINUANCE. The sentiment was just, and worthy the adoption of a great man, in danger of being unduly elated by present success, and dazzled by the glare of worldly glory. Were we more habitually to keep in view the changing and transitory nature of all terrestrial good, and the speedy approach of a state which will be final and everlasting, it would have a powerful influence on our character, moderating our present expectations and pursuits, and engaging all our intellectual powers in the attainment of salvation. The Scriptures invariably represent the world which we inhabit as an uncertain residence; and our condition in it as only probationary. All its doctrines, precepts, warnings, threatenings, and promises, proceed on the fact that our stay here is limited to a few short years, and that according to the improvement we make of our privileges will be our eternal destiny. This earth is a theatre on which Jehovah is unfolding the arrangements of his providence, and the stupendous methods of his grace. Every new dispensation is an increasing display of light and glory, shedding fresh lustre on the perfections of his nature, and placing his moral character in a most interesting point of view. It is a stage on which *we* too have to act an important part; developing the principles

which actuate and govern the mind, and expending our energies in the cause which lies nearest to the heart. Along with animal life, we received at our birth a rational subsistence, which is the germ or bud of our immortal being; and which, in this lower soil, is to vegetate, expand, blossom, and fructify, until it is fit to be transplanted to its appropriate state in the region of spirits. We are candidates for eternity; this is the school in which we are to derive the elements of our knowledge—in which our faculties will be matured, and our characters formed, for an enduring world; and it is the field in which we are to labour, to combat, and overcome, before we can obtain the conqueror's crown. Life itself is but a pilgrimage; it is a journey to heaven or hell; and every step which we take accelerates our progress either to the abodes of the blessed, or the regions of the damned. Our only mode of departure is by dying. Death is the entrance to immortality; the mysterious point which divides time and eternity; the gloomy, and, to our senses, the impenetrable passage between this world and the next. We must throw off the robes of mortality, before we can receive garments new and white: and the earthly house of this our tabernacle must be dissolved, before we can be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.

Although death is absolutely certain, and even

*necessary* to the perfection and happiness of the Christian, and the final retribution of the sinner, yet the precise time of its approach is, in much wisdom, concealed from us. We know that we *shall* die, but *when* is a secret locked up in the cabinet of heaven. “For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.” How ought this consideration to awaken our attention to the things which belong to our peace, and engage our diligence in the habitual pursuit of them! Our life hangs on a slender thread; and on the same uncertain tenure is suspended our eternal destiny! It is the folly and crime of many that the whole of their care is directed to the concerns of this transitory world; while eternal realities have no share in their solicitude and regard. It might be imagined that they only expected to spend a dying life on earth, and that there was no futurity beyond the grave; or that they supposed it was their privilege to live here always. They never ask, What shall we do to be saved? How shall we flee from the wrath to come? What good thing shall we do to inherit eternal life? If they attend on the means of grace, it is merely to satisfy the conscience, by passing through the forms of religion: they discover nothing of the earnestness of men fully

awake to the danger that threatens them, and anxious for immediate safety. Oh, that we may feel the full import of the question, "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?"—and that the whole business of life may be to prepare for the solemn approach of death!

"He who sits, from day to day,  
Where the prison'd lark is hung,  
Heedless of his loudest lay,  
Hardly knows that he has sung.  
Daily visitations come,  
Publishing to all aloud,  
Soon the grave must be your home,  
And your only suit a shroud.

But the monitory strain,  
Oft repeated in our ears,  
Seems to sound too much in vain,  
Wins no notice, wakes no fears.  
Pleasure's call attention wins,  
Hear it often as we may;  
New as ever seem our sins,  
Though committed every day.

Death and judgment, heaven and hell,  
These alone, so often heard,  
No more move us than the bell,  
When some stranger is interr'd.



**58 DEATH—CERTAIN IN HIS APPROACH.**

**Oh, then, ere the turf or tomb  
Cover us from every eye,  
Spirit of instruction come,  
Make us learn that we must die!"**

## CHAPTER IV.

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*Death—terrific in his aspect.*

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As pale and wan as ashes was his look,  
His body lean and meagre as a rake,  
And skin all withered as a dried rook,  
Thereto as cold and dreary as a snake,  
That seem'd to tremble evermore, and quake ;  
All in a canvas thin he was bedight,  
And girded with a belt of twisted brake,  
Upon his head he wore a helmet light,  
Made of a dead man's skull, that seem'd a ghastly sight.

SPENSER.

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OF all the evils which sin and the curse have brought into the world, death, perhaps, is the most formidable. What, think you, must have been the emotions of our great progenitors, when first they saw his defacing hand on the countenance of their beloved Abel,—when they hung in

silent suspense over the breathless corpse,—when every avenue to the senses was closed, and all was cold and motionless as the frigid marble? They had felt the bitter effects of transgression in their removal from Eden, the seat of pure and uninterrupted bliss, and in the toils and sufferings to which they had been doomed in a wild and barren desert; but neither the loss of Eden's bliss, nor the various natural evils to which they were exposed, would be so appalling in their aspect, as the visage of this ghastly monster—Death. Habit, indeed, has somewhat softened to us its terrors, and rendered it more familiar to our view. We daily hear of the triumphs which death has made over our neighbours and connexions, and are surrounded by the sad memorials of departed worth. And yet we cannot anticipate its approach to ourselves, nor see its ravages on others, without feelings of dismay and concern.

The Israelites in the wilderness have in all ages been considered as typical of the church of Christ. On their departure from Egypt, Canaan was promised to them for a possession; and they were commanded to drive out the original inhabitants, who, by their sins, had forfeited the divine favour; to build them cities and plant vineyards. The land of promise was emphatically called “a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys

and hills ; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates ; a land of oil olive, and honey ; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass." And yet between this country, so rich in temporal good, and the dreary desert they had left behind, Jordan, swollen by the melting of mountain snows, rolled her rapid and boisterous tide. The scenery around was wild and mountainous ; and the margin of the river well wooded by trees, which had become a covert for beasts of prey. In addition to this, the waters of Jordan were bitter, and emptied themselves into the dead sea : so that every thing contributed to affright the approaching stranger, and render the passage difficult and alarming.

And between the desert of this world and the celestial Canaan rolls the dark river of death ; and none can pass from the one to the other without fording its cold and swelling flood. As the Christian pilgrim slowly descends to its dreary banks, he is startled by the sound of the enemy ; or alarmed by the hollow murmur of the stream ; or terrified by the threatening cloud. All around wears a cheerless and forbidding aspect ; and faith alone can penetrate the gloom, and chase away the mists, which conceal the heavenly Canaan from his view. No sooner does he dip his foot in the waters of this Jordan, than

a sudden trembling creeps through all his bones ;  
the stream runs high ; he starts back ; and

“ Linger—shivering on the brink,  
He fears to launch away.”

To depraved human nature death has always been a formidable enemy, and is, therefore, justly called “the king of terrors.” His form is ghastly and emaciated ; he is armed with cruel and deadly instruments ; and the horse on which he rides is wan and pale. Usually he is preceded by fierce and cruel *diseases*, with intense *pain* and *suffering*. Some, indeed, are mercifully spared those corporeal sufferings, and that mental anguish, by which others are long and painfully exercised. The manner of their departure is so sudden and easy, as rather to resemble a translation, than the ordinary act of dying. At one moment, they are surrounded with all the advantages and comforts of life, and the next, overwhelmed with all the awful realities of eternity. The wheels of nature stop, and its vital springs break and dissolve, without any visible marks of previous derangement. But by far the greater part of the human race arrive at their last long home by a rugged and dreary course. The tempest howls dismally around their frail tabernacle, and is felt through all its joints and crevices ; and the pins which hold together the

feeble structure, are removed, one by one, before the building is finally taken down. How many linger for months, and even for years, under severe chronic disorders, which neither the soothing attentions of friends, nor the power of medicine, can cure. Through the long hours of the night they are burning with fever, or distracted with pain, counting the strokes of the clock, or listening to the footsteps of the solitary passenger. As they lie, turning from side to side, upon their beds, they anxiously wait for the slow return of the morning; and still when the day breaks, they feel fresh uneasiness, and again desire the return of the shadows of the evening. "He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain; so that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat. His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen; and his bones, that were not seen, stick out. Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers." How appropriately descriptive of such a case are the expressions of Hezekiah! "He will cut me off with pining sickness: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me." But who can depict the last struggles of dissolving nature? While the body, covered with cold damps, begins to faint and swoon, the eye looks wistfully round on attending, weeping friends, and seems to implore a relief which they, alas! are unable to impart. We

have heard the hard-fetched gasp, and the deep and hollow groan; but no mind can conceive, neither have any come back from the regions of the dead to inform us, what are the pangs of that last conflict in which we must all engage.

Death deprives us of all the *comforts* and *enjoyments* of life. Although the earth on which we tread has partaken of the miseries of the fall, and has been shorn of its primæval glories; although its scenes are often cold, barren, and cheerless, and its society only compels us to seek a refuge in the closet, and a solace in secret communings with God; yet still it bears on its front the most indubitable proofs of its high original. When nature rises from her wintry tomb, and begins to put forth her buds and blossoms, and to teem with fruits essential to life, nor less delicious to the taste; when the woodlands are dressed with foliage, and the vallies are covered with flocks, and the hills are crowned with standing corn; we cannot refrain from gratefully adoring both the wisdom and goodness of the Almighty. Art has also combined with nature to contribute to our comfort; and our houses, with their various furniture and appendages, afford us many conveniences and much enjoyment. But most of all are we sensible of the sweets of friendship, and the endearments of connected life. How often have we returned from the bustle of the world,

worn down with care and fretted with disappointment, and have found a peaceful asylum in the bosom of our family, and balm in the voice of our dearest earthly friend. And yet on these scenes, and on those enjoyments, death closes the eye for ever. The grave is "a land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness." The spring returns with her beauties, and autumn with her stores; but only to dress afresh the green sod that covers our last narrow house, or to clothe the yew-tree or the cypress which marks the spot where our ashes slumber. The sun rises and sets, and the stars move on in their courses, but we are insensible of their influence. Our once happy dwellings, the scenes of our social comfort and domestic joys, are inhabited by strangers, and other hands pluck the fruit of the trees which we ourselves planted and reared. The loneliness of the tomb is not relieved by the visits of our connexions; and soon a new generation springs up, to whom we were altogether unknown.

Death is the termination of our earthly *businesses* and *pursuits*. Man is an active being. By his inventive genius, and incessant industry, he acquires property, extends his connexions, and enlarges the sphere of his exertions. When one avenue to wealth is closed, he opens new



sources of commerce; and to effect his purpose of honour or of gain, he endures privations the most severe, and braves dangers the most threatening. He builds houses, and inhabits them; and plants vineyards, and eats the fruit of them. But death arrests him in his career of labour or of glory, strips him at once of all his possessions, and obliges him to exclaim, in the act of expiring nature, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Whatever industry or talent has acquired, whatever has yielded to our comfort, or delighted the senses, we are obliged to leave behind; for we "brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." "Be not afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased. For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him." "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish." The daring enterprizes of the wise and sanguine are destroyed; and the ideal visions which hope had created pass away as a dream when one awaketh. Our Lord has exposed the folly, guilt, and danger of setting the affections on the world, and neglecting the concerns of eternity, by a striking parable. "And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a

certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." How restless the anxieties, how selfish the projects, how vain the presumption, how certain and how dreadful the punishment, of the worldling! Oh! if it were said to any of us, by the same prevailing voice, "*This night thy soul shall be required of thee;*" whose face would not turn pale, and whose heart would not tremble? Alas! we have many sins unmourned for to confess; plans unfinished to execute; and holy resolutions, which have been deferred to another and a distant day, to put in practice.

Death closes all our present *connexions*. In this world we are engaged to each other by many natural and acquired ties. The sound of father, husband, brother, child, excites inconceivably

pleasing and tender emotions in the heart. We are formed for social intercourse, and our relations and friendships are strong and binding. But death dissolves the closest bonds, separates, one from another, the dearest earthly friends, and deprives them of the joys of social intercourse. While it leaves survivors forlorn and desolate; while it takes from the wife the companion of her retired hours, and from the child the guide of his youth; it consigns the remains of the departed to the grave, a dreary dwelling-place, a frightful solitude. “I shall see man no more in the land of the living.” “As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away: so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more. He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more.” “His children come to honour, and he knoweth it not; and they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them.” We willingly remove from our presence what was once the desire and delight of our eyes. “Give me,” said Abraham of Sarah, who for many years had been his much beloved companion, “Give me a possession for a burial place, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.”

Death dissolves our *natural being*. It destroys that dear and intimate connexion which has long subsisted between the soul and the body. “The silver cord is loosed, and the golden bowl is

broken: the pitcher is broken at the fountain, and the wheel broken at the cistern." It tears asunder the material and spiritual parts of our nature; and while it flings the immortal spirit into unknown regions, and associates it with invisible realities, the body, once so beautiful and vigorous, becomes the prey of corruption and of worms. It commits all that is mortal to the grave, a cold and cheerless mansion, there to moulder till the morning of the resurrection. An important distinction was made, under the law, between such vessels as were clean, and such as were unclean. The earthen vessel that was ceremonially defiled was commanded to be broken in pieces; while those vessels that were made of more costly materials were only to be cleansed with water, or purified by fire. "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." A separation, so painful and agonizing, nature yields to with reluctance. An apostle has declared, "not that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon;" that is, not finally put off the body, but have it glorified with the soul. And even our blessed Lord felt the reluctance of nature to dissolution when he said, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Most men would prefer a translation to heaven, like that of Enoch or Elijah, to the natural horrors of dying.

Death is the introduction of the *soul* into the immediate presence of God, its offended Sovereign, and final Judge. Sin has rendered every intimation of an approaching Deity alarming and awful. No sooner had our first parents fallen, by transgression, than they fled and hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden, on hearing his voice in the cool of the day. When Manoah saw the angel ascending in the flame of the burnt-sacrifice which he had offered to the Lord, he said unto his wife, "we shall surely die, because we have seen God." Our consciences accuse us of guilt, and lead us to forebode the infliction of punishment, so that every messenger from the invisible world seems charged with heavy tidings; and even when God himself comes to us on an errand of love, we not unfrequently misinterpret his design, and our fears present him armed with the instruments of vengeance. "The sinners in Zion are afraid: fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" If such be the natural operations of the human mind, at the distant sound of the footsteps of the Deity, in this scene of labour and combat, what must be the emotions of the disembodied spirit, on its entrance into the unseen state—placed, for the first time, in the full blaze of the divine glory, and summoned before the tribunal

of the Majesty of heaven? How many sins, at that moment, will flash on our recollection; how many threatenings, which we have perused with indifference, will then startle and awaken the conscience; and with what terrors will our guilty fears invest the divine character? How solemn to feel ourselves standing alone in the presence of God, without a friend to help, or an advocate to plead our cause, deeply sensible of our deserts, and waiting, with trembling anxiety, the sentence which is to determine, for ever, our future destiny! Nothing can allay the fever of the mind, and calm the perturbation of the soul, at this dread hour, but an act of faith on the atoning blood of Jesus, and the humble hope of interest in his finished righteousness.

Death fixes, and that irrevocably, our *future destiny*. The present world is a scene of probation and trial. Our continuance in this state of being is in order to our preparation for another. We are amply furnished with the means of salvation, and are stimulated to faith and repentance by the doctrines and promises of the gospel. In the Holy Scriptures we are warned, intreated, and expostulated with, that we may turn from our evil way and live. The blood-stained banner of the cross is planted in our solemn assemblies; and, as it waves its crimson folds, we see written in legible characters, **THE BLOOD OF JESUS**

CHRIST HIS SON CLEANSETH US FROM ALL SIN: and HIM THAT COMETH TO ME, I WILL IN NO WISE CAST OUT. All the treasures of divine love are opened, and all the springs of divine mercy are broken up, to us, in the ministrations of religion. God is, in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; and, we are beseeched, in his name, not to continue one day, nor one moment, longer, in a course of daring impiety and rebellion. But death is the close of that which is preparatory, and the commencement of that which is final and eternal, in the destiny of man. It subjects our immortal spirits to an ordeal which countless millions have passed, but none can explain; and flings them, without any avail from the experience of others, into a state of untried being. If we have not secured the pardon of our sins, and the sanctification of our souls, it will be in vain to seek for these inestimable blessings, when once we have left the world, and entered on the confines of eternity. The sound of mercy reaches not to the regions of the dead: those who die before they are reconciled unto God, die under the load of their sins, and perish for ever. Sabbaths are ended; the volume of inspiration is closed; the ministry of man ceases; and the ordinances of religion are no longer dispensed. “If the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where

the tree falleth, there it shall be." The gates of heaven will then be shut, and he who knocks and cries, in the phrenzy of despair, "Lord, Lord, open to us, open to us!" will only hear from the lips of insulted love, the doleful sentence, "I know you not whence ye are: depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity."

Such are the terrors of death. It is a most humiliating change passed on the body; it finishes the scene of our probation on earth, and introduces us to a new state of existence; it is often preceded by nameless infirmities and sufferings; and its consequences are of a character the most solemn and awakening. Who then does not feel a dread of death? Where is the man who has not some misgivings as the event approaches, and who would not rather be spared the unknown trial? On Mr. BOSWELL informing Dr. JOHNSON that he had seen the execution of several criminals at Tyburn two days before, and that none of them seemed to be under any concern, he replied, "Most of them, Sir, have never thought at all." "But is not the fear of death natural to man?" said BOSWELL. "So much so, Sir," answered JOHNSON, "that the whole of life is but keeping away the thoughts of it." Were an inhabitant from heaven to visit our earth, and see the myriads that teem on its surface, dividing their time between business



and pleasure, he would naturally ask, Are these thoughtless busy creatures only designed, like the gaudy insect on the wing, to flutter in the beams of a summer's sun, and then retire and perish? Or are they immortal beings who have strangely forgotten their character and employment, their origin and destiny? However men may lose the thought of dying, amidst the cares of domestic life and the turmoil of the world; or forget its terrors while engaged in the gay scenes which invite the senses, and yield them a momentary gratification; the awful hour of departure will sooner or later arrive, and the longer they have deferred the consideration of it, the more fearful will be the surprise which will seize them, and the more intolerable the consequences of death, in a future world. Oh, that we knew the day of our merciful visitation; that we were disposed, by faith, to secure an interest in the atoning sacrifice of Christ, who has extracted the sting of death, and removed the terrors of the grave; and that our life was one unbroken course of holy obedience, and diligent preparation for eternity! An application of the blood of sprinkling, in all its freshness, to the conscience, accompanied with a high state of personal sanctification, can alone enable us to receive with composure and fortitude the visit of the last enemy.

However formidable death may be to human

nature, it is of indispensable necessity to the perfection and happiness of the Christian. As, under the Jewish economy, the house infected with leprosy could not be cleansed, but must be taken down and cast into an unclean place, so our earthly tenement, defiled by sin, of which it is both the occasion and instrument, must be demolished and re-built, before it can become the abode of a holy and beatified spirit. Nor can the soul be perfectly fitted for the service and enjoyment of God, nor receive its full award of blessedness, until it is freed from the bondage of corruption, and walks in light and liberty. Death is the gate of immortality; and although it may grate on its brazen hinges, it opens on scenes of unfading beauty, and endless joy. Like the tribe of Manasseh, half of which remained on this side Jordan, while the other half had their lot assigned them in the land of Canaan, our meaner nature has a lonely dwelling in the ground from whence it was taken; while the soul, released from its fetters, wings its way to a fairer world, and waits the arrival of its long-lost companion, refined and glorious, at the resurrection morn.

“ DARK RIVER OF DEATH, that is flowing  
Between the BRIGHT CITY and me,  
Thou boundest the path I am going,  
Oh, how shall I pass over thee?

When the cold stormy waters rise o'er me,  
And earth disappears from my sight,—

When a cloud rises thickly before me,  
And veils all my spirit in night :

When the hands I love dearly are wringing,  
The eyes all for me wet with tears,  
The hearts that surround me still clinging,  
And I all misgivings and fears :

Ere the warmth of that love be departed  
That binds us so closely below,  
Could I bear to see them broken-hearted,  
Nor feel all the sting of their woe ?

O DEATH! thou last portion of sorrow,  
The prospect of heav'n is bright ;  
And fair is the dawn of its morrow,  
But stormy and dreadful thy night !

O THOU who hast broken the pow'r  
Of this, the last victor of men,  
Be with me in that solemn hour,  
O grant me deliverance then !

The glory from Calvary streaming,  
May shine o'er the cold sable wave ;  
And the faith that is oftentimes beaming,  
May burst through the gloom of the grave.

And peace may shine cloudless above me,  
When I think what my Saviour has said,  
THE FATHER HIMSELF deigns to love me,  
And JESUS has died in my stead !

With the prospect of meeting for ever,  
With the bright gates of heaven in view,  
From the dearest on earth I could sever,  
And smile a delightful adieu !"

## CHAPTER V.

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*Death—unsparing and invincible in his attacks.*

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Each moment has its sickle, emulous  
Of Time's enormous scythe, whose ample sweep  
Strikes empires from the root; each moment plays  
His little weapon in the narrower sphere  
Of sweet domestic comfort, and cuts down  
The fairest bloom of sublunary bliss.

YOUNG.

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DEATH is a cruel and relentless adversary, he spares neither the delicacy of sex; nor the tenderness of age; neither does he listen to the plea of usefulness, nor of growing prosperity. Every human being may adopt the language which David addressed to his son Solomon on his death-bed, "I go the way of all the earth." There never were but two exceptions to this general rule. Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him: and Elijah, dropping his mantle on the gazing prophet, mounted the

glowing chariot of fire, and was quickly conducted to heaven. If we trace back the stream of time, and review the millions that have floated on its surface, we soon lose them in the boundless abyss of eternity. “Our fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?” Where are the men whose memories have been preserved in the page of sacred history, and whose examples of virtue have been recorded for our imitation? Where those prodigies of literature, science, and the arts, by whose labours we are reaping, in the present day, the most essential benefits? Where the founders of mighty empires, the conquerors of nations, and the terror of the world? Where the far-famed orators who declaimed in the senate, or who thundered in the forum, and whose elocution governed the opinions of states, and decided their destinies? Where?—alas! they only live in the poet’s song, or in the historian’s page. The darkling shadows of a long evening have fallen upon them, and the grave hides them till the morning of the resurrection. What has become of those whose deeds of valour have been chronicled by fame,—of a Philip, an Alexander, and a Cæsar, the pride of Greece, and the glory of Rome? After stretching their conquests over vast provinces, and weeping because there were no more worlds to conquer, all the dominion they possess is a shroud, a coffin, and a grave. How often has the laurel been

exchanged for the cypress, and the triumphal chariot for a hearse, and the bridal-bed for a darksome tomb! "There is no discharge in this war." The infant, before its tender mind begins to unfold and expand, is removed, from a world of care and grief, to a paradise of perfect joy: and "if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many." Of the beggar who, pressed by the necessities of nature, sought relief from door to door; and of the rich man who, clothed in purple and fine linen, fared sumptuously every day, we are simply told that *they died*. "The wise men die." "The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come." Neither our internal piety, nor our outward circumstances; neither the qualities of the mind, nor the beauty and strength of the body; can preserve us from the attacks of him who rideth upon the white horse. Death knocks, with equal step, at the palaces of the great, and the cottages of the poor: he levels all distinctions; and the monarch, as well as his subject, is obliged to claim an unnatural alliance; to say "to corruption, Thou art my father: to the worm, Thou art my mother, and my sister."

The commission which the Lord of hosts gave

to Saul is more extensively given to Death. “Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.” Similar to this was the command issued to the destroying angel in regard to Jerusalem. “Go ye through the city and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women.” With what fidelity he has executed his commission is proved by the experience of all ages, and the history of all nations.

*Here* the new-born babe expires as it enters the porch of life, or, is snatched from the breast of its mother, and seeks an untimely grave. If permitted an existence, it just lives long enough to sip of the cup of human woe, and, satisfied of its bitterness, it turns to a spring of purer joy, and of perennial bliss. It opens its eyes on a vale of tears, and, as if disappointed with the land it sought to inhabit, weeps and withdraws. Neither the assiduity of a nurse’s care, nor the warm caresses of a mother’s lips, can delay the flight of the winged stranger, or prolong the period of its earthly sojourn. Those who die in infancy are like the buds of summer flowers, that are nipped by the chill frosts of night, or broken off from their parent stock by the rude winds of heaven.

“ DEATH has his infant-train ; his bony arm  
Strikes from the baby-cheek the rosy charm ;  
The brightest eye his glazing film makes dim,  
And his cold touch sets fast the lithest limb.”

*There* the anxious mother is called from the duties and solitudes of a numerous family, and finds a solace from domestic cares in the peaceful silence of the tomb. Judging after the manner of men we say, Of what inconceivable importance is such a life to the personal comfort and social happiness, but especially to the formation of the character, of her rising offspring? A father's loss may, in some measure, be supplied; a mother's never. She sits as the presiding genius in the household, always present to diffuse happiness by her smiles, to impart instruction by her maternal counsels, and to stimulate by her prudent example. Perhaps she dies in giving birth to her weeping babe, and the expiring groans of the mother are blended with the tears of her living child. “She that hath borne seven languisheth: she hath given up the ghost: her sun is gone down while it is yet day.”

*Here* a youth in whom centered parental hope, and whose bosom beat high with expectation, is arrested just on his entrance into life, and for ever closes his eyes on all terrestrial good. The scenes which had entranced him, and which drew off his attention from the weightier concerns of



eternity; and the bright visions of hope which his ardent imagination had figured for the future; are dispelled, and vanish. In the assembly of the gay, perhaps, and in the heated room of fashionable amusement and dissipation, he feels the chill of death, and retires from the crowd to a dark and lonely mansion. And *there* a father, in the midst of his days, the guide, the protector, the support, of his rising offspring, is removed from the post of duty, and ceases active exertion. Busy and laborious in the pursuits of this transitory life, and prudently laying up for his children provision for the future, he is arrested by the strong arm of the destroyer, before his schemes are half finished, and leaves the world when it has the strongest hold on his affections.

Alas! how soon are the most important relations dissolved, and the dearest ties broken! Fourteen years did Jacob serve Laban for his daughter Rachel; and they seemed to him only a few days for the love which he had to her. And yet how short the connexion,—a connexion which promised many years of connubial happiness! In the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem, we see the pillar of Rachel's grave: it was erected by the hand of an affectionate husband, in memory of one who was dear to him as his own life. In reading the touching history of Ruth, we have often sympathized with the

aged Naomi, as we have seen her returning to her native city Bethlehem. The report of her arrival is soon spread, and her old acquaintance, gathering around her, begin to inquire after her welfare, and that of Elimelech and her two sons. The tears start into her eyes, and, with a faltering accent, she says,—*They are gone.* “ Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?” Neither can we peruse, without emotions of the deepest interest, the lamentation of David over Saul and Jonathan: nor the sudden burst of impassioned feeling in which he indulges on the death of his son Absalom.

There are other instances, of a more public nature, which show the relentless hand of death. A minister enters on the duties of his office, with a high sense of his awful responsibility, and a deep solicitude for the spiritual and eternal welfare of the people committed to his charge. He collects an attentive and listening throng; and he speaks with all the holy energy and impassioned fervour of one who feels the value and danger of immortal souls, and is eager to snatch them from the fires of the burning lake. His glowing zeal and hallowed fidelity are

crowned with success: but, in the midst of his usefulness, his voice falters, and his lips are sealed. The multitude who so recently were instructed by his doctrine, and allured by his example, now follow him to the grave, exclaiming, “My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof!” It is thus that God provides for his church the fittest instruments, endows them with the most eminent qualifications for his service, and permits the hopes of thousands to be suspended on their labours, and then he removes them in the very zenith of a brilliant career, in order to display to his people his infinite sovereignty, and surprise them with the variety and amplitude of his own resources. “It is a piece of divine royalty and magnificence, that when he hath both prepared and polished such a utensil, so as to be capable of great service, he can lay it by without loss.”

The philanthropist pursues, with unremitting activity, his work of charity: and yet before his schemes of benevolence are half completed, his heart ceases to respond to the cries of suffering humanity. Of HOWARD it has been said by the eloquent BURKE, “that he visited all Europe (and the East) not to survey the sumptuousness of palaces, nor the stateliness of temples; not to make accurate measurements of the remains of ancient grandeur, nor to form a scale of the

curiosity of modern art; not to collect medals, or to collate manuscripts; but to dive into the depth of dungeons; to plunge into the infection of hospitals; to survey the mansions of sorrow and of pain; to take the gauge and dimensions of misery, depression, and contempt; to remember the forgotten; to attend to the neglected; to visit the forsaken; and to compare and collate the distresses of all men, in all countries. His plan is original, and it is as full of genius, as it is of humanity. It is a voyage of discovery, a circumnavigation of charity; and already the benefit of his labour is felt more or less in every country." And yet he died in the noble cause of benevolence; for in visiting a young lady who lay dangerously ill of an epidemic fever, in order to administer relief, he caught the distemper, and fell a victim to his humanity.

The demise of an individual is certain to excite more or less interest, in proportion to the relation in which he stood to society, and the manner in which he has discharged its varied and important duties. The departure of the affectionate and prudent father of a family, will be mourned by his surviving children: while the little circle, to whom his name and virtues were endeared, tenderly sympathize in their grief. The loss of the faithful pastor of a Christian church, or of a wise and conscientious magistrate, will be deeply felt

by the weeping crowds who for years have observed his manner of life, and have themselves, perhaps, been benefited by his disinterested services. But a discreet and virtuous monarch is the father of a loving people; and when *he* is taken away by the hand of death, his funeral urn is wet by a nation's tears, and all ranks present their tribute to embalm his memory. Especially, if his subjects have been born beneath his sceptre; if they have received their education, and their character has been formed, since he began to govern; and if his very name and image are associated with their earliest recollections, they will feel as though they had lost an important link in the chain of their social happiness; as though an object rich in beauty, and venerable by age, had sunk into the earth, and changed the appearance of the landscape on which the eye had once delighted to repose. Kings and princes, like stars in the hemisphere, attract attention by their elevation and splendour; and when they are arrested in their course, and fall from their orbit, the event excites universal sympathy, and reads a most instructive and admonitory lesson.

Death destroys the thoughts of the noble statesman, and puts an end to all his enterprizes; withers the newly gathered laurels of the warrior, and tramples on the crowns and thrones of monarchs. Neither parental tears, nor the imploring

hands of infant suppliants, nor a church's prayers, nor a nation's hopes, can stay the arrest of the mighty conqueror, or save from the insatiable grave. And, what is still more affecting, all the solemn and urgent pleas of the dying sinner himself will be of no avail. In vain he urges plans which he has not been able to bring to maturity; a family unprovided for; or the more important plea of an immortal soul for which he has never cared, and earnestly intreats space for repentance; longer, and yet a little longer, that he may escape the damnation of hell, and secure the joys of heaven! When once the hour of our departure has arrived, the thread of life is broken, and we are hurried out of the world. It might have been expected that, had an exception been made on behalf of any, it would have been in favour of those who were otherwise peculiarly distinguished of the Almighty. And yet even these favourites of heaven are not spared the agonies of dying, nor the dishonours of interment. The scythe of death mows down the full blown flower, and the medicinal herb, as well as the poisonous weed. Abraham, the friend of God; Moses, who had seen Jehovah face to face; David, the man after his own heart; John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, and whom he permitted to lean on his breast at supper; and Paul, who had been transported into the third heavens;—all were obliged to walk through the valley of the shadow

of death, and to cross the swellings of Jordan, ere they could tread the shores of the heavenly Canaan. Even the Son of God himself, before he was crowned with glory and honour, suffered the agonies of death—the accursed death of the tree, and was entombed in the new sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea.

There is no war, however protracted and sanguinary, in which a truce is not admitted. The contending parties, worn down by fatigue, and having their ranks thinned by the sword, ask of each other repose, before the conflict is renewed. At other times, tired with the struggle, and disgusted with scenes of carnage and of blood, they propose terms of peace, and withdraw from the murderous field. But death is a cruel tyrant; his thirst of conquest is insatiable; he never says “It is enough!” but rides forth, in all the pomp and pride of victory, conquering, and to conquer. He cuts down successive generations of mankind, without any distinction of age, rank, or clime.

There are few warriors so void of the common feelings of humanity, as not to be moved by the tears of the vanquished, or the suppliant intreaties of a fallen enemy. History has recorded some remarkable instances of noble generosity on the part of conquerors. But death is inexorable. He is not to be restrained by infant cries, nor by

beauty's tears, nor by manly eloquence, nor by the sage importunity of hoary age. Like those barbarians who, in former times, laid waste the sweetest fields of nature, and wantonly demolished the finest specimens of art, to complete their savage triumphs; he robs the world of its brightest ornaments, and cuts off its fairest hopes. While he hurls his shafts at the sons of decrepitude, ignorance, and poverty, he blasts the bloom of youth, and the flowers of genius, and dashes at his feet the crowns of royalty. Xerxes, after destroying all the temples of Greece, spared that of Diana, on account of the elegance of its structure: and yet no qualification, either of person or of mind, can move the unpitying eye, or turn away the scythe of death.

“ Death loves a shining mark, a signal blow ;  
 A blow which, while it executes, alarms  
 And startles thousands with a single fall.  
 As when some stately growth of oak, or pine,  
 Which nods aloft, and proudly spreads her shade,  
 The sun's defiance, and the flock's defence,  
 By the strong strokes of lab'ring hinds subdu'd,  
 Loud groans her last, and rushing from her height,  
 In cumbrous ruin thunders to the ground ;  
 The conscious forest trembles at the shock,  
 And hill, and stream, and distant dale resound.”

While death is *unsparing* and *relentless*, he is also *invincible* in his attacks. There are many evils which we may successfully resist, or carefully



avoid. We read of some renowned worthies “who subdued kingdoms ; stopped the mouths of lions ; quenched the violence of fire ; escaped the edge of the sword ; waxed valiant in fight ; turned to flight the armies of the aliens.” And yet, in vain we attempt to grapple with the power, or elude the pursuit, of the last enemy. “Strong as death, and cruel as the grave,” is a proverbial expression ; and he who would enter on the conflict must find his resistance impotent. “There is no man hath power over the spirit, to retain the spirit ; neither hath he power in the day of death.” Infidelity and profligacy may assume a tone of defiance, and jest unseemly with the solemnities of a funeral scene, and an opening sepulchre ; but their swelling words of vanity will soon be silenced, and their music turned into the voice of mourning. Many instruments have been invented, and modes of stratagem, or of defence, have been adopted, to stay the progress of the conquering hero, and defeat his bold and daring enterprises. But death laughs at the shaking of the spear ; and proudly sets at nought all that nature or art could oppose to his triumphs. His designs are not to be thwarted by the subtlety of the politician ; or the force of marshalled armies ; or the entrenchments and fortifications of ancient cities. Veiled by the curtains of an impalpable immateriality, he passes unseen through every obstacle, and seizing, with iron hand, his victim,

obliges him to exclaim, "Thou hast found me, O mine enemy!"

Uncertainty is attached to all human warfare. He that wins to-day in the field of slaughter, and wears the laurel of victory, may to-morrow be routed by the enemy, and become his captive in chains. Hence, in the Roman triumphs, it was the custom for the conquering General, as he rode in state through the metropolis of his country, amidst the shouts of teeming multitudes, with the chief of his enemies bound in fetters to the wheels of his chariot, to have a slave running at his side with this corrective of his glory—"Look behind thee, and, in the persons of thine enemies, learn that thou thyself art a man subject to the same casualties and dishonours with others!" The success of a battle depends on so many contingencies, which no human prudence could foresee or guard against, that the wise are frequently taken in their own craftiness, and the mighty men are vanquished. But the war of Death is never doubtful. *He* marches with sure step, laden with the spoils of the conqueror, and exulting in the certainty of his aim. Those who never fought but to conquer, have themselves been subdued by this insatiable foe.

Whither, then, shall the sinner turn in the day of visitation? or how shall he escape the righteous

indignation of the God of heaven? No policy can evade the piercing eye of omniscience. Like a flame of fire, or like a meridian sunbeam, it penetrates the thickest gloom, and throws its light on the hidden things of darkness. “Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.” Although we seek concealment in the clefts of the rock, or in dens and caves of the earth; although we cry to the mountains, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; we cannot elude the vigilance of that Being, who “looketh on the earth, and it trembleth: who toucheth the hills, and they smoke.”

“Death lurks in ambush; Death, without a name,  
Shall pluck thee from the pinnacle of fame;  
At eve rejoicing o'er thy finish'd toil,  
Thy soul shall deem the universe her spoil;  
The dawn shall see thy carcass cast away,  
The wolves, at sun-rise, slumber on their prey.

Cut from the living, whither dost thou go?—  
Hades is moved to meet thee from below.”

Neither can the sinner successfully resist the power of omnipotence. With what a tone of sovereign independence does the Almighty speak to Job out of the whirlwind? “Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like him? Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency; and array thyself with glory and beauty. Cast abroad the rage of thy wrath; and behold every one that is proud, and abase him. Then will I also confess unto thee that thine own right hand can save thee.” If Jehovah only touch the creature with his afflicting rod, immediately his strength fails, and his beauty consumes away like a moth. When impotence wages war with omnipotence—the fluttering insect of a day, with the Father of eternity, the contest cannot be doubtful. “If thou hast run with the footmen and they have wearied thee, how wilt thou contend with horses? If in the land of peace thou hast been overcome, how wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan?” “Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth; but woe unto him that striveth with his Maker.”

Nor can he safely indulge the thought of anni-

hilation. He who has made the spirit of man has determined to perpetuate its existence, either in a state of inconceivable happiness, or of unutterable woe. The sinner may destroy his natural being; but he cannot destroy that conscious intelligence, by which he reasons, reflects, and is sorrowful. “Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear; Fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell.” Oh then, let him now seek to be reconciled to God, through the death of his Son, that the evils which he cannot escape may be turned into blessings; let him secure on his side those perfections of the divine character which have long been an object of dread; that, interested in the Christian charter, death may be enrolled in the number of his advantages.

If death is unsparing and invincible in his attacks, we ought to hold our comforts with a loose hand, ready to surrender them at the divine command, and disposed patiently to submit to the righteous will of heaven. Our fairest possessions are held by an uncertain tenure: we are only stewards of the manifold gifts of God, and he, as their great proprietor, may take them away at pleasure. Who knows how soon the enemy may break in on our little circle, removing the

objects of our tender affection, and fondest hopes ; and turning our dwellings into a desolation ! “ Wilt thou set thine heart on that which is not ? ” is a question which comes home to the bosom of every human being. The brightest scenes on earth are only fitting shadows ; and the sweetest comforts of life but gourds, with worms at their roots.

And, when our dearest earthly treasures are removed from us, let us, without a murmur, resign ourselves to the divine will, saying, from the heart, “ the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord.” When we reflect on the perfection of his character, especially on his attributes of wisdom, equity, benevolence, and faithfulness ; when we think on his infinite right in us, and in all that we possess ; and when we consider the present world as only a link in the great chain of existence—a narrow vista which opens to the wide expanse of eternity ; it becomes us to submit our judgment and feelings to the decisions of the all-wise Supreme ; unsuspectingly to confide our interests in his hands, and wait the disclosures of futurity. Such a temper of mind is honourable to God, and conducive, in a high degree, to our own peace and holiness. To resist the will of God is fruitless rebellion against the Majesty of heaven ; and to repine against it, discovers a heart unhumbled

under his mighty hand, and unaffected by the stupendous realities of the unseen world.

“ FRIEND after friend departs ;  
Who hath not lost a friend ?  
There is no union here of hearts  
That finds not here an end !  
Were this frail world our final rest,  
Living or dying none were blest.

Beyond the flight of time,—  
Beyond the reign of death,—  
There surely is some blessed clime  
Where life is not a breath ;  
Nor life's affections transient fire,  
Whose sparks fly upwards and expire.

There is a world above,  
Where parting is unknown ;  
A long eternity of love,  
Form'd for the good alone :  
And faith beholds the dying here  
Translated to that glorious sphere !

Thus star by star declines,  
Till all are past away ;  
As morning high and higher shines  
To pure and perfect day :  
Nor sink those stars in empty night,  
But hide themselves in heav'n's own light.”

## CHAPTER VI.

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*Death—rapid in his movements, extensive  
in his triumphs, and various in the  
instruments he employs.*

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On—on he hastened—and he drew  
My gaze of wonder as he flew :  
Though like a demon of the night  
He passed, and vanished from my sight ;  
His aspect, and his air, impressed  
A troubled memory on my breast ;  
And long, upon my startled ear,  
Rung his dark courser's hoofs of fear.

BYRON.

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PREVIOUS to the deluge, while the new world was thinly peopled, and before men were hardened in crime and perfected in the arts of vice, the march of Death was slow, and his arrows were thrown with a cautious and sparing hand. The human frame, although sadly changed by the fall, still retained much of its primitive



strength and beauty: nor was it till after ages, when crime multiplied and wickedness increased, that the consequences of sin were seen in their most hideous and direful forms. Some of our great progenitors lived nearly to the advanced age of a thousand years; a period of considerable length when compared with the contracted span to which human life is now reduced. The grisly monster seemed to sleep in his gloomy caverns, with his quiver by his side, and only now and then shook off his slumbers and awoke to point his darts, and prepare himself for the work of destruction. Since the deluge, his conquests have been more rapid, and the number of his victims have been increased. Threescore and ten is the common boundary of human existence; and but few of the human race arrive at this short limit. Hence the destroyer is figured to our imagination not as walking, or running, but as *riding*; which denotes the swiftness of his course, and the sudden manner of his approach.

That Death moves with astonishing *celerity* is evident, from the many conquests he makes, and those in places widely distant from each other. While one has received his mortal wound in our own immediate neighbourhood, another, and yet another, is struggling with the last convulsive throes of nature, in other parts of the world. The thoughtless postboy is ever conveying the melan-

choly news of friends departing, or departed, little conscious of the pangs which will be inflicted by his sealed bag. The work of death is proceeding, at the same time, in all countries, however separated they may be by natural boundaries, by language, colour, or clime. The description which Job gives of the war horse, may be applied to the pale horse of death. "The glory of his nostrils is terrible. He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength: he goeth on to meet the armed men. He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword. The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the shield. He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage: neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet. He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha; and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains and the shouting." Concealment is impossible; and escape is utterly fruitless and vain. Death is only the minister of Him whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and whose purposes can neither be evaded nor resisted. The thickest ambushments of nature are not more defended from his arrows than the wide and open plain; nor the crowded city, with its busy hum, than the lonely path-way, or the sequestered glen. Saul and Jonathan, although swifter than eagles, and stronger than lions, are slain on the high places of Israel.

As Death comes swiftly, so his approach is frequently *sudden* and *unexpected*. “The Lord will come in a day when we look not for him, and an hour when we are not aware.” “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.” “For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.” “Behold, the Judge standeth before the door!” Although these passages primarily referred to the destruction of Jerusalem, and may now have a more direct reference to the second coming of Christ, and the final consummation of all things, yet they will apply, with equal force, to the period which finishes the probation of every man on earth. The allusion to the progress of lightning is significant and striking. It is one of those phenomena in nature which comes upon us in a manner the most sudden and surprising. Rapid in its motion, and vivid in its appearance, it is seen from one end of heaven to the other; and, on a dark tempestuous night, is awfully grand and resplendent. Too many never think of death or judgment till the summons of their departure arrives. Engrossed by the cares of the world, or fascinated with its fleeting pleasures, they neglect to secure the unfading joys and substantial possessions of immortality. Because the scene, at present, is gilded, and their sky without a cloud, they anticipate no change;

but fondly dream that to-morrow will be even as to-day, and so much the more abundant. One would imagine that, like the brutes that perish, they were only capable of serving the purposes of mere animal life, and that they had no consciousness of a never-ending state of being beyond the grave. Sometimes, indeed, memory, that busy, meddling thing, revives past scenes of guilt, and forces the apprehension of future punishment. Conscience faithfully performs its office, and plants in their bosoms a thousand stings of bitter remorse: and yet they soon apply a palliative to the wound, and seek to ease its anguish, by engaging in new pursuits, or rushing into fresh scenes of dissipation and folly. The prophet, describing the moral state of the Jews, when the law, which contained the great things of God and salvation, was to them as a sealed book, says, that "a spirit of deep sleep had fallen upon them." Such is the affecting condition of the great mass of mankind. They are neither moved by the judgments, nor the mercies of God; by the thunders of Mount Sinai, the lightning, the tempest, and the cloud, nor by the mild and attractive scenes of Calvary. They are fast asleep, like Jonah in the sides of the ship, while their shattered bark, tossed hither and thither on the ocean of life, by opposing winds and waves, is in danger of being wrecked for eternity. May we not address to such the

language of the ship-master to the slumbering prophet, "What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not." Insignificant as the bursting of a bubble to the destruction of a world, is the ruin which threatened Jonah, to that which hangs over the head of the impenitent sinner. You have not a moment for guilty trifling: while you hesitate, the tempest rises—the sea swells—and the returning wave may sweep you into the gulph of perdition. Many, beneath a serener sky, and on a smoother sea than your's, have been overtaken by the gathering storm, and have found an early grave.

Few, however, are so insensible of the value of invisible realities, and the necessity of preparation for heaven, but what they intend, at some future period, to repent of their sins, and believe on the Saviour: and yet, alas! before these pleasures are enjoyed, and that scheme of aggrandizement is completed, they are arrested by the cold hand of death, and laid in the silent tomb. The old world were warned by Noah one hundred and twenty years before the deluge; but they believed not this preacher of righteousness, till the flood came and swept them all away. On the morning of that memorable day, when God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone from heaven, the sun rose on the earth with all

its accustomed warmth and splendour. Little did the inhabitants of those devoted cities expect, when they saw its beams playing on their casement, that before it ascended its meridian, they would be "driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world." "For when they shall cry peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape." Death seizes the sinner unprepared; his old habitation falls down before he is provided with a new one; and, like the rich man, he knows not where he is, till in hell he lifts up his eyes being in torment. Oh, let us not forget the affecting case of the foolish virgins. They all slumbered and slept, till the cry was made, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him!" They then arose, trimmed their lamps, and went to buy oil. "And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, verily I say unto you, I know you not." Such, it is to be feared, is the fatal security of too many in the professing world. Unlike the prudent man, who foreseeth the evil and prepareth himself, they neither apprehend, nor provide against, the approach of death, until they hear the trampling of the horse at the door, and see

at their bed-side the grim visage of its rider. The evil servant saith in his heart, "My lord delayeth his coming; and begins to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken:" and what is the result? will he always bear with the unjust steward, and never call him to account? Oh, no! "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." "The triumphing of the wicked is short." However they may escape the hand of justice for a season, and exult in their prosperity, we know him who hath said, "To me belongeth vengeance and recompense; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things which shall come upon them make haste."

Death, also, is *extensive* in his triumphs. We read of the REIGN of death: and never had sovereign so wide a dominion. This reign is universal; stretching over all nations, and throughout all ages. It commenced with the entrance of sin; sways its iron sceptre over every depraved human being; and will only finish its victories when the harvest of the world is reaped. Other conquerors have been limited in the extent of their dominions, and in the duration of their

successes: but the domains of death are only to be circumscribed by the visible heavens; and his conquests will only cease with the close of time, and the conflagration of the globe. Men drop off like flowers in summer, or like leaves in autumn. "One generation passeth away, and another cometh." The solitary are set in families, and then become extinct: and nations and empires have their rise and fall. According to a moderate calculation, not fewer than eighty-one thousand seven hundred and sixty individuals are dropping into eternity every day; three thousand four hundred and seven every hour; or, about fifty-six every minute. What a view does this give us of the ravages of death! And if such be the triumphs of a single day, what must be the fruits of the victories of seven thousand years!

Have you sat down, my reader, to the perusal of these pages, with the desire of seeing the triumphs of death? Oh, could I take you to the couches of the sick, and the beds of the dying; to churchyards, already so crowded with slumbering inhabitants, that the bones of one corpse are obliged to be dug up from their quiet resting-place to make room for another; to the field of battle, where lie thousands of slain, cold and motionless as the ground which they embrace; to the ancient charnel-houses and repositories of our forefathers, whose dust has long since mingled



with its native dust, and whose mouldering skeletons are the only sad mementos of their frail existence;—then, indeed, you might mark the steps, and mourn the triumphs, of the conqueror, Death. In addition to his ordinary spoils, death, in every age, has had his CARNIVAL, when, not in the common course of nature, but, by some sudden and fearful judgment, multitudes have been removed from time into eternity. How often, and in how many countries, has a great cry been heard, like that in Egypt, when, in one night,—a night to be observed throughout all generations,—there was not a house where there was not one dead! At one time we read of seventy thousand Israelites destroyed by pestilence, as the punishment of the sin of David for numbering the people: and at another, of one hundred fourscore and five thousand Assyrians smitten by the angel of the Lord in the camp of Sennacherib; so that when those that remained arose early in the morning, they found their companions dead men.

“ THE Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,  
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;  
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,  
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

Like the leaves of the forest when summer is green,  
That host with their banners at sunset were seen;  
Like the leaves of the forest when autumn hath blown,  
That host on the morrow lay wither'd and strown.

For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,  
 And breath'd on the face of the foe as he pass'd ;  
 And the eyes of the sleepers wax'd deadly and chill,  
 And their hearts but once heav'd, and for ever grew still.

And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,  
 But through it there roll'd not the breath of his pride ;  
 And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,  
 And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.

And there lay the rider, distorted and pale,  
 With the dew on his brow, and the rust on his mail ;  
 And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,  
 The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.

And the widows of Ashur are loud in their wail,  
 And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal ;  
 And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,  
 Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord."

The achievements of death will never be fully known, till, at the morning of the resurrection, the voice of the Saviour shall break open the tombs of the departed, and animate the dust that has slumbered for ages. How great the multitude, when "the sea shall give up the dead which are in it, and death and hell shall deliver up the dead which are in them:" when they that dwell in dust shall awake and sing; when the dew of the nations shall be as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead!

The *instruments* which Death employs in accomplishing the work of destruction are various.

The most common of these is disease ; and either by a raging fever, or a slowly wasting consumption, or a severe chronic disorder, the springs of life are stopped, and all its wheels are broken. It is not necessary, indeed, in order to the dissolution of the body, that means should be employed. It is only for the Author of our being to withhold his supporting hand, and the fabric he has reared will dissolve and perish : although, ordinarily, the earthly house of our tabernacle falls, in consequence of previous, and slowly progressive derangement. The Jews used to reckon nine hundred and three diseases ; but the same disease assumes so many forms of attack, and modes of operation, as often to baffle the skill of the physician, and the power of medicine. They are communicated in a variety of ways, and sometimes through the very means by which we are nourished and supported. Our food is suddenly converted into poison, which rankles in our veins, and dries up the springs of life : and the very air which we breathe is loaded with noxious vapours, which strike to our hearts the chill of death. Nature presents us with one harvest in the year, but Death claims two : and spring and autumn people our church-yards with slumbering inhabitants, and clothe the living with the sad emblems of mourning. The fruits of autumn, pleasant to the eye and grateful to the taste, bring along with them acute and fatal disorders :

and the flowers of the vernal season unfold their loveliness to scent the room, or deck the grave, where lie our poor remains. To how many accidents are we exposed, the smallest of which may derange the system, and terminate our existence. Life is but a narrow path, which lies on eternity's dread brink, and the most trivial circumstance may plunge us into the gulph which yawns below. As you walk along the streets, a false step may dislocate a bone; or a tile may fall from the roof of an adjoining house, and fracture your skull. Indeed, when we consider the dangers by which we are surrounded; the wonderful organization of the human frame; of how many fine and delicate parts it is composed; and the derangements and diseases to which, from various causes, it is subject; the wonder is that we live so long!

“ Our life contains a thousand springs,  
 And dies if one be gone :  
 Strange! that a harp of thousand strings  
 Should keep in tune so long.”

If disease and accident silently remove individuals from this world into another, how incalculable the numbers which have been suddenly swept from the stage of time by some signal and awful judgment! The whole human race may be compared to the withering foliage of a widely



extended forest. While the sky is unclouded, and the air serene, the leaves drop off, one by one, from the branches: but, let the heavens lower, and the tempest rise, and thousands will be scattered in a moment. Floods, conflagrations, and hurricanes, have desolated villages and hamlets, hurrying to destruction their wretched and guilty inhabitants. Volcanoes, heaving with the burden of their subterraneous fires, have cast forth their burning lava among the hundreds who have dwelt at their base. Earthquakes have swallowed up whole towns and cities; burying amidst their ruins, and while yet alive, young and old, rich and poor. “ At one time, we hear of the clouds withholding their rain; the sun withering the herb of the field, and drying up all its springs; the locust eating what the palmer-worm hath left, and the canker-worm eating what the locust hath left; men snatching from each other’s hands their scanty provision, struggling between life and death, and starving till food could afford them no nourishment. At another time, we hear of contagion flying on the wings of the wind, and carrying its deadly poison from city to city, and from house to house; putting an end to all social living—obliging the father to flee from the sight of the son, and the son from that of the father; the wife to avoid the embrace of the husband, and the husband that of the wife; each dreading the sight of the person he most loves, lest he should

receive, or communicate, deadly infection." And yet the most destructive, and the most fatal, of all the visitations of the divine anger, is war. None of those scourges, which God hath brought upon man, are so fearful, or so desolating, as that which man brings upon himself. How many thousands of human beings are cut off by the operations of a siege, or in the turmoil of a battle? If a campaign is long, and often renewed, what a sacrifice is made of human life, and what numbers, in the flower and pride of youth, are mown down by the sword, and find an untimely grave? It is said that Cæsar, in fifty battles which he fought, slew one million one hundred and ninety-two thousand of his enemies: and if to this number we add the losses he sustained in his own troops, and the slaughter of men, women, and children, who resided on the theatre of war, we shall probably have a total of TWO MILLIONS of human beings, sacrificed to the ambition of one man! If we assign an equal number to Alexander, and the same to Napoleon, which probably we may do with justice, then to three military heroes we may ascribe the untimely death of SIX MILLIONS of the human family: a number appalling to the feelings of every friend of humanity.

When Xerxes reviewed his immense army, consisting of two million and three hundred thousand men, he wept, on the reflection, that in less

than a hundred years, not one of his brave troops would be living. How much more affecting is the thought to the Christian philanthropist, when he looks round on a world lying in the wicked one—a world, labouring under the effects of sin, and exposed to its fearful consequences; that, in a few short years, every human being who breathes will be numbered with the dead! And as new generations arise, and occupy the stations of those who have gone before, it is only that they too may fulfil the period of their probation, and be gathered to their fathers. Still more overpowering is the reflection, that all the inhabitants of this earth will shortly be in eternity—in that invisible, incomprehensible state, over which such a cloud of mystery continues to rest. The inhabitants of that state are every moment receiving fresh accessions: and, while I now write, another, and yet another, immortal soul mingles with the spirits of the departed, and shares their destinies. If every one who dies were fitted for the abodes of heaven, the exchange of worlds would rather be the subject of joyful exultation than of painful regret. Their departure hence would be the close of their sins and sufferings, and the consummation of their highest hopes of perfect purity and blessedness. And yet we fear that numbers perish: some through the lack of knowledge, and others from the wilful rejection of Christ and his salvation. If we esti-

mate the worth of the soul by its amazing capacity of suffering and enjoyment; by the infinite value of that precious blood which was given for its ransom; or by the eternity of misery, or of happiness, to which it is destined; 'we shall deeply feel for the millions of the human race who are without hope and without God in the world. We cannot cast the eye over a map of the globe, and see the vast tracts of country that are a moral wilderness,—parched as the burning desert, wild and fruitless as the barren heath,—and not most earnestly pray that the Spirit may be poured out from on high, so that the parched ground may become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water. Nor can we look round on the circle of our immediate acquaintance; on our beloved children, the pledges of our mutual affection, and the objects of our fondest hopes; and on those whom we employ in our service, and whom providence has committed to our care; without feeling the yearnings of compassion over such of them as are aliens from the common-wealth of Israel; and without putting forth every exertion that they may become fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. Time, like the silent yet rapid flow of a majestic river, is bearing us onward to the ocean of eternity. Soon our opportunities of usefulness will for ever close. Either those, in whose spiritual welfare we are most interested, will be removed beyond



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the influence of our instructions and prayers ; or we ourselves shall be called from the sphere of our labours. “ Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might ; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.”

## CHAPTER VII.

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*Death—appalling in his train.*

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Sure 'tis a serious thing to die ! my soul !  
What a strange moment must it be, when, near  
Thy journey's end, thou hast the gulph in view !  
That awful gulph no mortal e'er repass'd,  
To tell what's doing on the other side !  
Nature runs back and shudders at the sight,  
And ev'ry life-string bleeds at thoughts of parting !  
For part they must : body and soul must part ;  
Fond couple ! link'd more close than wedded pair.  
*This* wings its way to its Almighty source,  
The witness of its actions, now its Judge ;  
*That* drops into the dark and noisome grave,  
Like a disabled pitcher, of no use.

BLAIR.

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ALTHOUGH the natural terrors of dying strike powerfully on the senses, and excite emotions of painful apprehension and alarm in the bosom, yet *that* which will most operate on the fears of the truly awakened sinner will be the *consequences*

of death. Some escape much of “the pains, the groans, and dying strife,” to which others are subject, so that their departure appears more like a gentle dismissal from the body, than an arduous conflict; and even those who are called to grapple most with the last enemy soon lay down their weapons, and pass through the iron portals of mortality: but what follows after death, none have returned to inform us,—it is an entrance on a state of untried being, either of inconceivable happiness, or infinite woe. From the final destiny which awaits us, none can escape: and should we be adjudged to the pit of perdition, we can neither abate the fierceness, nor shorten the duration, of its glowing fires.

Even the Christian himself, in the fearful anticipation of death, will sometimes have many painful anxieties respecting the future. The region into which he is about to enter is the dwelling-place of the great Eternal, and the habitation of disembodied spirits. It is described by figures, all of which convey to us the idea of transcendent excellence and overwhelming grandeur. It is “the excellent glory;” “the richly glorious inheritance;” “the inheritance of the saints in light.” This lower world, robed in her richest dress, and covered with a flood of noon-day light, is only a shadow of the glory of the highest heaven: while the vast firmament, ‘stud-

ded with globes of sparkling beauty, is but the pavement of its lofty threshold. It was prepared by Jehovah "for the house of his kingdom, and for the honour of his majesty;" and the excellency of the work answers to the skill of the mighty Architect, and the greatness of the end for which it was designed. When God, in condescension to our infirmities, would give to us a faint resemblance of the magnificence of the new Jerusalem, he speaks of the foundations as precious stones, the gates entire pearls, and the streets pure gold, as it were transparent glass. Such a description is overwhelming to the imagination of the believer, and he cannot feel himself on the point of rushing into this full blaze of glory, with feelings of indifference. "Whither," says the anxious Christian, "am I going? through what regions of unbounded space shall I be carried? what is the character of those celestial beings who may be appointed to conduct me; and what the nature of that state into which I am about to enter? how does spirit associate with spirit; and how, just loosed from this tenement of clay, shall I bear the immediate vision of uncreated grandeur?"—these, and many other inquiries, will naturally arise in the mind of the dying saint. But, alas! no satisfactory answer to these momentous questions can be obtained. He must make the trial; he must mingle with spirits, before he can form any adequate idea of the world of spirits; and

he must stand in the full radiance of Deity, before he can comprehend the meaning of the expression, “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

The future world is veiled from the view of sense; and only some faint glimmerings of it are visible to the eye of faith. When our Lord Jesus passed into the heavens, he is said to have “entered into that within the veil.” The allusion is to that part of the temple of Solomon, called the holy of holies, which was separated from the Jewish sanctuary, and the mysteries of which were concealed from the gaze of the worshippers, by a curiously wrought curtain. Although “*hades* is naked before” the Almighty, “and destruction”—or that portion of the unseen world which is the region of lost spirits—“hath no covering; he holdeth back the face of his throne” from mortals, “and spreadeth his cloud upon it.” All that is resplendent in the one state, is a “glory yet to be revealed;” and all that is awful in the other, is merely shadowed forth by material emblems. And it is this concealment that is made of the world which is to be the habitation of our disembodied spirits, and the mystery that is thrown around all that relates to it, that exercise the faith, and damp the ardour of the expectation of the Christian. “It doth not yet appear what we shall be:” we only know, in

general terms, that we shall be like Christ, and see him as he is.

“ The vision of the tomb is past,  
Beyond it who can tell  
In what mysterious region cast  
Immortal spirits dwell?  
I know not, but I soon shall know,  
When life's sore conflicts cease,  
When this desponding heart lies low,  
And I shall rest in peace.”

There are other considerations, however, and of still higher importance, which will press upon the mind of the believer, in the anticipation of death. He knows that to be able to look forward with confidence to the tribunal of God and the awards of eternity, he must have the full assurance of his interest in the atoning blood of the Redeemer, and of his being the subject of the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. It will not be sufficient, in a dying moment, to settled peace and ecstatic joy, that he can indulge the faint hope that his sins are pardoned, and his heart renewed; he must have the inward witness of the Spirit that his guilt is cancelled, and his soul made meet to be a partaker of the heavenly inheritance. This, we have reason to fear, is only the privilege of a few: nor is the assurance of faith absolutely necessary to the safety of the believer, however desirable it may be to his

present comfort, and final victory. Too many arrive at the celestial Canaan, like ships in distress, with “sails ripped, seams opening wide, and compass lost;” or, like stranded mariners, who, clinging to some plank or broken part of the vessel, survive the foaming surge, and reach the destined shore: while others enter the peaceful harbour with their white canvas spread to the auspicious gale, and exult in sight of the New Jerusalem. The want of assurance may, in general, be traced to a deficiency in our views of Christian doctrine, to a self-righteous spirit, to the neglect of a close and holy walk with God, to spiritual sloth, or to some allowed sin in temper or in conduct. It is worthy of our observation, that the apostle Peter connects diligence with an abundant entrance into heaven. “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall. For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” And yet even when, in life, faith has been strong, and the practice consistent and correct, confidence has frequently been shaken, on a death-bed, by the progress of disease; and the once triumphant Christian has been obliged to advert to first principles, and instead of being able to say, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which

I have committed unto him against that day;" he can only smite upon his breast, and lisp the penitential prayer of the publican, "God be merciful to me, a sinner."

Besides, the best of men are often the most suspicious of their state, and the most fearful of self-deception. They do not doubt the unlimited mercy of God, nor the ability and willingness of Christ to save, nor the power of the Spirit to sanctify; but they doubt their personal interest in the blessings of redemption, and are led to question the reality of their past experience. And who can wonder that such should be the case, when the state of the soul, through an eternity of ages, seems to hang suspended on the decisions of one dread hour? Were we only looking forward to the moment which should cancel or confirm our title to a large estate, how would the pulse beat, and the heart palpitate? How would the bosom throb and swell with alternate emotions of fear and hope? But what is an estate, however rich and extensive, or the wide dominion of an empire, or the possession of the world itself, when contrasted with the never-fading inheritance of the saints? Oh, the very possibility of having the soul cheated of heaven and happiness; of slumbering through life, and only awaking to a sense of our condition when surrounded by the flames of hell; should lead us to pray,



“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” Nor are these gloomy suspicions of our state, these jealousies lest, after all our professions, we should miss of salvation, without their practical benefits. They are like summer clouds—dark, indeed, yet refreshing and fruitful: and although these buds of grace may not be so pleasing to the eye as the expanded flower, they are not so easily smitten by the blast of temptation, and are certain to blossom in the celestial paradise.

If such are the anxieties of the Christian in the prospect of death, what must be the awful *forebodings of the wicked?* Against them all the thunders of the divine law are levelled, and all the instruments of divine justice are arrayed. They are no imaginary evils which they fear; but those dreadful curses which are pronounced on the finally impenitent, and which the justice and veracity of Jehovah oblige him to inflict. No sooner is the soul of the sinner torn from the body, than it is dragged, as a guilty criminal, before the tribunal of heaven. In the frowning aspect of the Judge it reads the sentence, “Depart, ye cursed!” and sinks into the pit of eternal perdition. It is difficult to conceive what is the nature of that punishment which will be in-

flicted, at death, on the unbeliever and the disobedient. It is described in the sacred Scriptures by imagery the most fearful and appalling. Hell, the abode of condemned sinners, is called, "a lake of fire—a lake burning with fire and brimstone—fire prepared for the devil and his angels—the bottomless pit—a pile of fire and much wood, kindled, as a stream of brimstone, by the breath of the Almighty:" and the punishment of the ungodly is said to be "tearing in pieces—cutting asunder—drowning men in destruction and perdition—being bound hand and foot, and cast into a lake of fire—the gnawing of the worm which dieth not—weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." Whether these expressions are to be taken literally, or figuratively, we shall not stay to inquire: it is sufficient for us to feel that they convey the idea of an intensity of suffering inconceivably great. The sacred writers, in describing spiritual and invisible realities, borrow their imagery from objects with which the senses are familiar, that they may give to us a lively representation of those things which otherwise we should never understand. Still it is impossible that any thing in nature should impart to us a correct and vivid description of the unseen and eternal world. If, although the abode of the blessed is described by whatever is rare, and costly, and splendid, on earth, with whatever is most glorious in the aerial heavens, the represen-

tation comes infinitely short of the reality,—the figures which are used as illustrative of the torments of the damned, fetched from the darkest scenes of corporeal pain and anguish, can give to us a very inadequate idea of the mental sufferings of the wicked in hell. Can you conceive of a place where all good is excluded, and all evil, in the highest possible degree, is inflicted; where the wretched inhabitants shall be separated from the presence and favour of God, and from the company of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect; where every object that could engage the nobler faculties, and fill the enlarged capacity, of the immortal soul, will be withdrawn; where the mind will constantly be reflecting upon itself, and furnishing fresh occasion for just condemnation and keen reproach; where lust will burn, and passion rage, and envy fret, and malice vent her spite, thus increasing torment by increasing sin; where the sight of many a companion in guilt will only remind of past scenes, and aggravate present misery; and where every fiend will be a tormentor, adding fuel to the quenchless flame?—if you can conceive of such a place, that place is HELL.

Nor let it be forgotten that all this misery will be *eternal*. Oh! were there a limit put to the torments of damned spirits; could they look forward to a period, however distant, when they

should be emancipated from their dark domain, and introduced to light and liberty; this ray of hope shooting across the impenetrable gulph might relieve them from despair. But age after age, and myriads of ages in addition to myriads, will roll by, and they will only be the commencement of that perpetuity of suffering which awaits the finally impenitent. Let us think of the blades of grass which cover the whole field of nature; the particles of dust which compose the material universe; or the drops of rain which form the great and wide sea; and, however difficult the computation of their numbers might be, to a mind, having capacity for the effort, it would not be impossible. Or, let us imagine, with an excellent writer of the seventeenth century, this vast earth on which we tread turned into sand; and mountains of sand to be added still, until it reached the empyrean heavens: and let us further suppose that one grain of this immeasurable heap should be removed by some invisible hand every hundred thousandth year; however slow the process, there would eventually come a time when the whole of this mighty globe would be annihilated. But what is this imaginary period, however overpowering its numbers, to the duration of eternity! Let the wicked endure the fierceness of the divine indignation so many years as the reduction of this supposed globe of sand would require, and wrath to come would still be

wrath to come, through endless ages. “Eternity! ah, know you what it is? It is a time-piece, whose pendulum speaks, and incessantly repeats two words only, in the silence of the tomb—ever, never, ever—and for ever. During these awful vibrations, a reprobate cries out—what is the hour? And the voice of a fellow-wretch replies, ETERNITY !”

In the present life, when conscience stings, and affliction oppresses, there is much to relieve the mind of its burden, and to soothe the anguish of a bleeding heart. The man, who is the subject of a wounded spirit, may change the scene; and, in the contemplation of fresh objects, and by mixing with new society, he may, for a time at least, chase away those dark and frightful images with which he is haunted, and extract the bitterness of his grief. In the warm sympathy and kind attentions of friends, he may find a balm when corroded by care, and a sweet solace when disquieted by pain and sorrow: and the burden which was difficult to bear alone becomes lighter when shared by another. He has at hand, too, a never-failing remedy for all the maladies of his moral nature, and a sure relief under all the toils of his earthly pilgrimage, in the ample provisions and satisfying consolations of the glorious gospel of the blessed God: and it is his *fault* if he does not derive the benefit of them. But in that place

of torment whither the finally impenitent shall be sent, there will be nothing to divert the attention of a disordered mind, nor assuage the anguish of a troubled conscience. Let the sinner wander far and wide, he will meet with no rill of comfort; no spot, adorned with verdure, and illumined by the light of heaven, to which he may turn his distracted eye; and no virtuous friend, on whose bosom he may recline, and vent his useless wailings. On this vast sea of misery nothing rises but the billows of divine wrath: and in these dark and dreary regions no ray of light is seen to sparkle. He who once was called "the light and the life of men;" and of whom it was said, "a man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land;" is now only known in his judicial character, dispensing righteous retribution, and inflicting merited punishment. The volume of inspiration is closed; the economy of mercy is finished; and the promises of grace are withdrawn. Nor can the sinner look round on the wretched world which he inhabits, without perceiving that in the midst of millions he is bereft and alone; not a want can he express, not a grief can he utter, not a groan can he heave, with the most distant hope of being heard and answered. The rich man in hell, seeing Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom,

cried, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame:" and yet the pitiful boon was denied him. "Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence."

"What, my brethren—if it be lawful to indulge such a thought—what would be the funeral obsequies of a lost soul? Where shall we find the tears fit to be wept at such a spectacle? or, could we realize the calamity in all its extent, what tokens of commiseration and concern would be deemed equal to the occasion? Would it suffice for the sun to veil his light, and the moon her brightness; to cover the ocean with mourning, and the heavens with sackcloth? or, were the whole fabric of nature to become animated and vocal, would it be possible for her to utter a groan too deep, or a cry too piercing, to express the magnitude and extent of such a catastrophe?"

That the wicked have frequent forebodings of the misery that has been described, especially in

the near view of eternity, is a melancholy fact which is repeatedly pressed on our attention. Some, indeed, go out of the world like sheep to the slaughter; insensible of their state and character, and awfully indifferent to the decisions of the great day. Either from the absence of all serious thought, false views of Christian doctrine, a self-righteous spirit, or the influence of disease, they slumber even on the verge of the grave; till, at length, awaking from their golden dreams, they find their hope is cut off, and their trust as a spider's web. Others are sullen and morose; they avoid all inquiry as to the subject of personal religion, and carefully conceal from the inquisitive eye of friendship their perturbed feelings: while a few, it may be, assume a hardier front, and venture to smile at death, and treat, as the phantom of superstition, the world of departed spirits. Such was the conduct of HUME,—a man who confessed he had never read the New Testament with attention, and whose vanity prompted him to put on an air of indifference, and indulge in unseemly levity, while his heart was ill at ease.

And yet, in general, the wicked die with “a fearful looking for of judgment;” expressing their deep regret of the past, and unutterable dread of the future. Their sins are set in order before them; conscience takes the alarm; an apprehension of divine wrath preys on the spirits;



and every minute of their departing hour strikes the knell,—“The harvest is past; the summer is ended; and we are not saved.” They look back, and what a scene is presented to their view? Time misimproved; sins committed, and unpardoned; sabbaths, ordinances, and means of grace, neglected; offers of mercy slighted; and a willing and almighty Saviour scornfully rejected. They look forward, and their terrified imagination figures to them, the dissolution of the body in the darksome sepulchre; the appearance of the guilty spirit in the immediate presence of its Judge; the resurrection morn, and the terrors of the great assize; the sentence which shall be pronounced on the finally impenitent, their subsequent banishment from heaven, and their everlasting enclosure in the prison of hell. And while these awful realities pass in review, a voice from the excellent glory declares, “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.”

“ In that dread moment, how the frantic soul  
Raves round the walls of her clay tenement,  
Runs to each avenue, and shrieks for help,  
But shrieks in vain! how wishfully she looks  
On all she's leaving, now no longer her's!  
A little longer, yet a little longer,

Oh might she stay to wash away her stains,  
And fit her for her passage ! mournful sight !  
Her very eyes weep blood ; and every groan  
She heaves is big with horror : but the foe,  
Like a staunch murd'rer steady to his purpose,  
Pursues her close through every lane of life,  
Nor misses once the track, but presses on ;  
Till, forc'd at last to the tremendous verge,  
At once she sinks to everlasting ruin."

If the writer did not wish to spare the feelings of the living, he might narrate some instances of the power of conscience in the hour of death, which have come directly under his own observation. He has seen the damp chills which have been produced by the agony of a tortured mind ; the gathering countenance ; the dark rolling eye ; the clasped hands ; and the unceasing restlessness which is usually the accompaniment of fearful forebodings of the wrath to come : and he has heard the bitter wailings of conscious guilt ; the cry of anguish to the ear of mercy ; and the pitiable moanings of fell despair. He will not, however, disclose the scenes which he himself has witnessed, and which might give pain to surviving relatives, but simply state a few examples that have been recorded, on indisputable authority.

" Oh ! " said the Honourable FRANCIS NEW-  
PORT, looking at the fire which was in his room,  
" oh ! that I could lie and consume on that fire

for a hundred thousand years, to purchase the favour of God, and secure reconciliation to him ! And yet the wish is vain and fruitless : millions of millions of years will bring me no nearer the end of my tortures, than one poor hour. Oh, eternity ! eternity ! who can properly paraphrase on the words—for ever and ever !”

The excellent HERVEY, in a letter to a friend, thus narrates the bitter regrets of a person whom he visited on the point of death. “When I entered his chamber, and had seated myself near his bed, he cast a wishful look upon me and said, ‘Ah, Sir ! death is knocking at my doors : in a few hours more I shall draw my last gasp ; and then judgment—the tremendous judgment ! How shall I appear, unprepared as I am, before the all-knowing and omnipotent God ? Oh ! if the righteous Judge would try me once more ; if he would but relieve, and spare me a little longer ; in what a spirit would I spend the remainder of my days ! I would know no other business, aim at no other end, than perfecting myself in holiness. But alas ! why do I amuse myself with fond imaginations ? The best resolutions are now unavailing, because they are too late. The day in which I should have worked is over and gone ; and I see a sad horrible night approaching, bringing with it the blackness of darkness for ever.’”

The story of ALTAMONT, a young nobleman, and a near relative of Dr. YOUNG, is well known; and yet it is so affecting, that I cannot refrain from transcribing part of it. To a friend, whose morals he had injured, he said, "Remorse for the past throws my thoughts on the future. Worse dread of the future, strikes them back on the past. I turn, and turn, and find no ray. Didst thou feel half the mountain that is on me, thou wouldst struggle with the martyr for his stake, and bless heaven for the flames: those are not everlasting flames; that is not an unquenchable fire. My principles have poisoned my friend; my extravagance has beggared my boy; my unkindness has murdered my wife! and is there another hell? Oh, thou, blasphemed, yet most indulgent Lord God, hell itself is a refuge, if it hides me from thy frown."

The death of VOLTAIRE, the prince of French infidels, was one of awful interest. Notwithstanding the efforts of his friends to calm his mind, and support his resolution in his last moments, he expired in unutterable anguish. It was at the theatre, where he had just received the unbounded applause of a crowded audience, that he was first struck with the disease which closed his impious career. "The next day," writes MARMONTEL, one of his companions, "I saw him in his bed. Well, said I, are you at last

satiated with glory? Ah! my good friend, he replied, you talk to me of glory, and I am dying in frightful torture." To his physician he exclaimed, "I am abandoned both by God and by man. I will give you half my fortune, if you will save my life for six months!" "Sir," said Dr. TRONCHIN, "you cannot live six weeks." "Then," he replied, in a paroxysm of rage, "I shall go to hell, and you will go with me!" While his companions in infidelity fled from his bed-side unable to sustain the sight, or bear the horrible execrations which he pronounced on them, his physician declared, that the furies of Orestes could give but a faint idea of those of Voltaire.

I shall add one instance more, and it shall be from the more humble walks of life. It is related by a minister, who, at that time, officiated in a populous manufacturing town in the West of England, and was a spectator of the scene. "I once saw a man in despair. His appearance was terrific. His extended mouth, his dark and rolling eyes, gave a peculiarity to the object, which the feelings of humanity could scarcely endure. I stood motionless. He saw me, and thus addressed me. 'Come hither, young man, and see what it is to forsake the Saviour of the world. Fourteen years ago I was a professor of religion. I walked in the fear of the Lord, and

often enjoyed that peace which passeth all understanding. But on my removing from Romsey, and settling at Portsmouth, I forsook my closet, my Bible, and my place of worship; and now—God has forsaken me. I feel more anguish than I can express. \* \* \* Poor Mark, thou wast once a happy man; but now thou art miserable: once animated with a hope of future happiness; but now tormented by despair. If I were in hell I could not suffer more.’ Addressing his wife, who stood weeping by his side, he said, ‘Water, water: give me water: for in five minutes it will be denied me!’ When he had taken a little, he looked me in the face and said, ‘Oh, that I could take some with me to hell! but that is impossible.’ He then lifted up his eyes, and thus addressed his Sovereign Judge, ‘Righteous art thou, O Lord, when thou judgest; and just art thou, when thou condemnest. I have deserved all that I suffer; I have abused thy mercy; I have defied thy power. When sinking beneath thy vengeance I will exclaim, Thou art just and holy.’ I retired from this awful scene with a class of feelings which I cannot easily describe.”

These impressive examples are instead of a thousand arguments to convince us of the truth that “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” However wicked men, while

living, may assume an air of ease and gaiety, and even smile at what they conceive to be the effects of a heated imagination, or the phantoms of a gloomy superstition, they have found, at death, their confidence fail, and that the things which they had treated as the creation of fancy, are indeed awful realities. The alarm of such persons is usually great in proportion to the surprise with which they have been seized, and the sense they entertain of the number and aggravation of their sins. The phrenzy of their despair reminds us of the irruption of a burning mountain, the embers of whose fires have been so stifled in its hideous caverns, that even the smoke which once ascended to its summit is not visible ; yet now they gather fresh strength, and rolling their tremendous thunders, break out with increased violence. Oh, it is a fearful thing to die, without hope of an interest in the Saviour ! When Saul understood that *to-morrow* he and his sons should be numbered with the dead, “ he fell straightway all along on the earth, and was sore afraid, because of the words of Samuel ; and there was no strength in him : ” and when Belshazzar, in the midst of his banquet of wine, saw a hand writing in mystic characters on the wall, his countenance changed, the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another. Nor are these the feelings of men of infidel principles, and profligate lives, merely : most who are

conscious of their guilt, and have no sense of pardon through the sacrifice of Christ, will dread the hour which closes the term of their probation, and introduces them into a state which will be final and everlasting. "Oh, Sir," said one to his pastor, who came to visit him, "my life is done, and my work is not begun!" "The battle is over," said a minister of religion, in high station, "and the victory is lost." Who can imagine the condition of that man, who knows that his body, emaciated by disease, cannot live, and is equally certain that his guilty and terrified soul dare not die!

"Oh, the hour when this material  
Shall have vanished like a cloud;  
When amid the wide ethereal  
All the invisible shall crowd;  
And the naked soul, surrounded  
With innumerable hosts of light,  
Triumph in the view unbounded,  
And adore the Infinite.

In that sudden strange transition,  
By what new and finer sense  
Shall she grasp the mighty vision,  
And receive its influence?  
Angels, guard the new immortal  
Through the wonder-teeming space,  
To the everlasting portal,  
To the spirit's resting place.

Will she there no fond emotion,  
Nought of earthly love retain;



Or, absorbed in pure devotion,  
 Will no mortal trace remain?  
 Can the grave those ties dissever,  
 With the very heart-strings twined?  
 Must she part, and part for ever,  
 With the friend she leaves behind?

No: the past she still remembers,  
 Faith and hope, surviving too,  
 Ever watch those sleeping embers,  
 Which must rise and live anew:  
 For the widowed lonely spirit  
 Mourns till she be clothed afresh,  
 Longs perfection to inherit,  
 And to triumph in the flesh.

Angels, let the ransom'd stranger  
 In your tender care be blest,  
 Hoping, trusting, free from danger,  
 Till the trumpet end her rest:  
 Till the trump which shakes creation  
 Through the circling heavens shall roll,  
 Till the day of consummation,  
 Till the bridal of the soul.

Lo! it comes, that day of wonder,  
 Louder chorals shake the skies:  
 Hades' gates are burst asunder,  
 See the new cloth'd myriads rise!  
 Thought repress thy weak endeavour,  
 Here must Reason prostrate fall:  
 O the ineffable 'For Ever,'  
 And the 'Eternal All in All.'"

## CHAPTER VIII.

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*Death—arrested in his progress, and finally  
destroyed.*

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Grave—the guardian of our dust!  
Grave—the treasury of the skies!  
Every atom of thy trust  
Rests in hope again to rise!  
Hark! the judgment-trumpet calls!  
“Soul—re-build thy house of clay—  
IMMORTALITY thy walls,  
And ETERNITY thy day!”

MONTGOMERY.

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When an enemy has long asserted dominion, and ruled with a sceptre of iron over a widely extended empire; abridging the liberty and destroying the happiness of its subjects; the heart of the patriot rebounds with joy on every incursion which is made on the limits of his influence and authority; and exults in the prospect, however distant, of his final overthrow. The reign of

death has been extended over successive generations of men, and its ravages will be continued until the day of general resurrection. We have seen its effects on our neighbours and kindred; and forebode the period when we ourselves shall lie prostrate beneath the power of our common foe. What heart, therefore, does not rejoice to know that his triumphs have been met by signal reverses; that in conquering, he himself has been conquered; that the curse has been turned into a blessing; and that the time will arrive when he who has been the merciless destroyer of the human race, shall himself be destroyed?

The destruction of death is the distinguishing prerogative of the SAVIOUR, and is intended to constitute a splendid part of his mediatorial triumphs. Of him it was predicted, "He shall swallow up death in victory:" and in another prophecy he exclaims, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes." To the Jews he said, "Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation." And amidst the ravages of death, and the desolations

of the grave, he proclaims his character, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

In the Old Testament, the sacred writers present us with some interesting exhibitions of divine power in restoring individuals to their friends and society, after a temporary suspension of the functions of animal life. The case of the widow's son at Sarepta; the child of the Shunamite; and the dead man whom his friends were carrying out for burial, and who revived on touching the bones of the prophet Elisha; might be mentioned as subordinate proofs of the *possibility* of a resurrection. We pass over these, however, in order to fix our attention more minutely on those examples, which are recorded in the evangelical history, of the power which the Redeemer displayed, in the days of his flesh, over the invisible world. With what ease does he deliver the prey from the mighty, and make the lawful captive go free? He only speaks, and the stream of life returns into the cold and pallid corpse, circulates through every vein, and penetrates every pore; giving motion to the limbs, health to the countenance, and expression to the eye. Bereaved parents clasp their restored children in their arms, and each exclaim, "It is meet that

we should make merry and be glad; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.”

We have an instance of the dominion of the Saviour over death, in the case of the RULER'S daughter. She had just attained her twelfth year; an age peculiarly endearing. Her father, who had heard much of the power and grace of Jesus, hastened, in the hour of extremity, to implore his aid; but, while he was touchingly preferring his suit, a messenger arrived to say that it was too late—death had executed his commission, and had removed, from this probationary scene, the object of his tenderest affection. Still he is encouraged by the compassionate Redeemer *only to believe*, and his daughter should be made whole. On entering the house they find that those who were in attendance had already performed for the dear departed some of the last sad offices; the precious remains were laid out for interment, and the minstrels were making a noise. “And all wept and bewailed her: but he said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. And he put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise. And her spirit came again, and she rose straightway: and he commanded to give her meat. And her parents were astonished: but he

charged them that they should tell no man what was done."

Another instance occurs in the case of the widow's son of NAIN, and, if possible, under circumstances of still deeper interest. He had arrived at the flower of manhood; at that period when the qualities both of the person and the mind unfold their loveliest tints, and emit their sweetest fragrance. And what rendered the bereavement still more afflictive was, that he was the *only* son of his mother, and that mother—a widow. She had doubtless often rejoiced in reaping the fruits of her maternal anxieties and care, and had anticipated the full reward of her sufferings and labours in the growing advantages she would have in her child, of protection and endeared social intercourse. But her last coal is now quenched; the staff of her declining years is broken; and her only earthly hope is extinguished. With a heart smitten with grief, and wrung with anguish, she follows the wreck of all her relative comforts to the grave. Her case interested the hearts of those who knew her, and, moved by sympathy, they joined the train of mourners; for "much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young

man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother.”

The resurrection of LAZARUS is still more remarkable. He was part of the interesting family at Bethany; and although beloved of the Saviour, he was suffered to languish of disease, and then die. His friends discharge the ordinary rites of sepulture, and return to their habitation, each mourning the loss of his companion, or benefactor. Jesus, who had seemed all this time to neglect the importunity of the sisters who had sent to inform him of the sickness of their brother, now makes his appearance; and while he sympathizes with them in their sorrows, prepares them for a surprising display of his power. They are slow to admit the consolation he imparts, supposing that the body had already undergone the process of putrefaction. He inquires as to the place of his interment, and is conducted to the spot, accompanied by many of the Jews. “It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with

grave-clothes ; and his face was bound about with a napkin."

Among the prodigies by which the crucifixion of the Saviour was signalized, and the divinity of his mission confirmed, the Evangelist narrates that "the graves were opened ; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many."

It is, however, in the DEATH of Jesus that we recognise the greatest achievement that has been made over the king of terrors. We have seen the law of mortality passed on the human race, on the commission of sin ; that it was not only designed as a punishment for transgression, but was intended as a wise enactment to check the progress of iniquity, and prevent the accumulation of crime ; that it was necessary to show the infinite demerit of moral evil, and the detestation in which it is held by a Being of spotless purity. Before that law, then, can be repealed, or rather before the sting of death can be removed, and the hope of a blessed immortality be secured, the righteous designs of the divine government must be fulfilled ; a satisfaction must be made to infinite justice, answerable to its wise and equitable claims ; and, while an atonement is offered for the guilt of sin, a remedy must be found for



the depravity and impotency of human nature. All these gracious purposes have been accomplished by our Lord Jesus Christ. He laid aside the robes of royalty, and descending from the regions of light and immortality, became an infant of days, and a sorrowing sojourner on earth. In the nature he assumed, he was subject to all the sinless infirmities of humanity; and, at length, he expired in the agonies of a cruel and ignominious death. That death had a sharpness peculiarly its own; for, in addition to the bitter pains of crucifixion, he was made a **SIN-OFFERING**; the guilt of sin was imputed to him as our Surety, and he bare the chastisement of our peace. This was the expedient which infinite wisdom devised, in order to meet the claims of divine justice, and vindicate the honours of the divine government, in the redemption of human kind. By giving himself a ransom for many, the Saviour has disarmed the monster of his sting, and laid a foundation for the future triumphs of his people. As the blood of the cross **expiates** for sin, so it provides the means of its subjugation and final destruction in the heart, and thus either removes the penalty, or turns the curse into a blessing.

“If sin be pardoned, I’m secure,  
Death hath no sting beside;  
The law gives sin its damning power,  
But Christ my ransom died.”

And yet, although death was *virtually* conquered by the sufferings of Christ, there was nothing in this event to satisfy the church that the triumph had been achieved. Still he was under the dominion of the last enemy, and detained, as a prisoner, in the new tomb which had been prepared for Joseph of Arimathæa. The important issue seemed to hang in doubtful suspense, and neither man nor angel dared to strike his harp. Silence reigned in heaven; while melancholy sat brooding on the countenances of his disciples on earth. Meanwhile the infernal legions, and their emissaries, the wicked Jews, too hastily judging of their success, shout victory. It was not till the Redeemer burst asunder the barriers of the grave, spoiling principalities and powers and making a show of them openly, that he was publicly recognized as having finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness. As long as the sepulchre imprisoned him, we had no evidence that our Surety had been accepted; or, that the payment of the debt which had been exacted, had satisfied the claims of infinite justice. His resurrection was his full discharge; it attested the divinity of his mission, and the completeness of his mediatorial work; it illustrated the nature, and established the certainty of a future state; and while it was the pattern, it was also the pledge and earnest of the resur-

rection of believers unto eternal life. He is called "the first-fruits of them that slept:" as, under the law, the sheaf which was waved before the Lord was an assurance of the approaching harvest, so the Saviour's resurrection to life and glory is the earnest of the resurrection of all his people. He is "the first-born from the dead:" thus owning the successive generations of departed believers to be his brethren, and engaging to restore them, after his own example, to a new and immortal existence. He is "the head," and those who have been regenerated and justified "are his members:" nor can they be finally separated. The event of their future exaltation is so certain, that even now they are said to be "raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

In the fifth chapter of the epistle to the Romans, the Apostle traces a striking analogy between Adam, as the head and representative of his posterity, and the public character of Christ. He states the fact, without attempting to account for it, that, by the offence of our first parent, the whole human race has become subject to temporal death, and inherit the taint of moral depravity and pollution. And yet, in opposition to this fact, he places another, in which the grandeur and sublimity of the gospel dispensation consists, that Christ, in his public capacity, as

the Father of an innumerable seed, has ransomed the body from the bondage of corruption, and procured the means of the restoration of the soul to a new and divine life: so that the future condition of every redeemed sinner will far surpass, in glory and blessedness, the state of man before the fall. O, it is refreshing to turn from this earth, the fair bloom of which sin has blighted and death destroyed, and see a new world rising out of the ruins of the old, robed with brighter heavens, and adorned with a richer dress, than what were presented to man in Paradise, on the morning of his creation. And how ought we to adore the grace which has brought out of this moral chaos, these dark and confused elements of depravity, guilt, and ruin,—a spiritual empire of immortal subjects, in whose complete purity and happiness the Redeemer shall be eternally glorified!

Death is *partially* conquered in the experience of every genuine Christian. Faith in the sacrifice of Christ, extracts its sting; strips it of the terrors by which it is invested; and gives it rather the appearance of a friend, than that of an enemy. What renders dying fearful is a consciousness of guilt, a sense of divine wrath on the soul, and an apprehension of future punishment beyond the grave. It is the province of faith to see Christ bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, and suffering the penalty due to trans-

gression; and when this fact is cordially believed, and its full influence felt on the heart, it will have the effect of removing guilt from the conscience, and restoring peace to the soul. Dying, to such a man, will rather be the object of *desire* than of *dread*; and he will speak of it as “going hence—a departure—falling asleep—being for ever with the Lord.” Even the grave itself will be anticipated as his long home; a quiet resting-place from the labours and sufferings, the temptations and conflicts of this probationary state; and as the portal to his Father’s house, in which are many mansions, suited to the capacity of each individual believer. To him the bitterness of death is past; and elevated above the distressing apprehensions of mortality, he is enabled to exult in prospect of the solemn hour of dissolution. Even amid the pains of expiring nature he feels the peace of God which passeth all understanding, if not a joy unspeakable and full of glory. In the triumphant language of the Apostle, he looks into the dreary sepulchre and sings, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

“As some lone captive, on a foreign shore,  
Sighs to behold his native land once more;

Counts the dull hours before he breaks his chain,  
 And greets his lov'd, his long-lost home again :—  
 So bound and fetter'd to her cell of clay,  
 Th' impatient spirit longs to burst away ;  
 Scorns the vain world for nobler realms above,  
 And burns to dwell in everlasting love."

Several examples of the departure of persons in this happy frame of mind might be enumerated, but one shall suffice. It is that of a youth who, in the morning of life, had escaped the pollutions of the world, and fled for refuge to the Saviour, and the evening of whose short day was brightened by the hopes of a blissful immortality. To a friend who observed "You seem to enjoy foretastes of heaven?" he exclaimed, "O this is no longer a foretaste—this is heaven. I not only feel the climate, but breathe the fine ambrosial air of heaven, and soon shall enjoy the company! Can this be dying? This body seems no longer allied to the soul! It appears only as a curtain that covers it; and soon I shall drop the curtain, and be set at liberty!" Then, putting his hand to his breast, he exclaimed, "I rejoice to feel these bones give way!" repeating it, "I rejoice to feel these bones give way, as it tells me, I shall shortly be with my God in glory!" This is to cross Jordan at its narrowest point, and when its waters present the most peaceful calm; to see the ark of the covenant borne above the flood; and to erect, on the other side, a monumental pillar

of gratitude to Him who “stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people.” As Moses, from Mount Nebo, had a vision of the goodly land promised to the fathers, and then expired; so the Christian, in his departing hour, is occasionally favoured with delightful anticipations of heaven: and even those who die less happy, may not die less safe.

If such is the anticipation of heaven, what will be its full *enjoyment*? Who can conceive the nature of that perfect happiness on which the disembodied spirit of the believer enters at death? To say that it is a rest remaining for the people of God, a perpetual sabbath, an eternal jubilee, comes far short of the divine reality. It is indeed an entire freedom from all those evils under which the body labours, and the spirit groans. Toil and labour, languor and disease, anxiety and care, sin and suffering, temptation and conflict, are altogether unknown among the inhabitants of that blessed world. When the mariner has cast anchor in the haven, he has ceased from the toils, and escaped the perils, of the ocean: when the labourer, invited home by the shadows of the evening, receives his wages, it is implied that his work is done: and when the traveller reaches the end of his journey, he has surmounted the difficulties of the way. “And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me,

Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

And yet heaven is not a mere cessation from evil. It is the perfection of the soul in knowledge, holiness, and happiness; the employment of its faculties in the contemplation, love, and obedience of the great Supreme; and the entire enjoyment of all that can gratify the taste, and fill the capacity, of a renewed and sanctified mind. What grace has begun on earth, shall be consummated in glory: our virtues will be matured, and have ample range for their exercise: and while our honours will be enduring, our joy shall be complete. Death, then, has no cause to boast of its triumphs, for, to the believer, "to die is gain." As mariners, threatened with shipwreck by a violent storm, think themselves safe when able to quit the vessel, they abandon it to the buffetings of winds and waves, and escape to land with their riches and lives; so the Christian rejoices to leave the body a melancholy wreck on the ocean of life, peradventure his immortal soul and all his heavenly treasures are secured, persuaded that God will one day gather together the scattered pieces of the broken vessel, and form them after a higher model, and to a diviner use.



Death will *finally* be destroyed in the morning of the general resurrection. We look back to distant generations, and find it impossible to trace out the spot where lay the tombs of our ancestors. The hand of time has destroyed the frail memorial of their name and age; has broken up their solitary habitation, and scattered their ashes to the winds of heaven; has turned the dreary abode of the dead into a fruitful field; and, for ought we know, the dust of our progenitors has enriched the soil from which we have derived the means of our subsistence, and become the component parts of our own bodies. Nay, it is not improbable, that the very earth on which we tread was once living, and either assumed the form of vegetative or animal existence. And why, on these accounts, should it be thought a thing incredible with us that God should raise the dead? He that, on the first creation, called things which were not as though they were, bringing out of a rude and shapeless chaos this uniform and beautiful world, enriching and adorning it with all that contributes to our convenience and comfort, can be at no loss to collect the scattered dust of believers, and, purifying it from whatever is gross and earthy, make it the fit abode of a redeemed and sanctified soul.

As if to illustrate the doctrine of the resurrection, and confirm our faith in divine revelation,

we have many striking emblems furnished us in nature. In the dreary months of winter, the earth presents to the eye little more than a general sepulchre : and yet, on the return of spring, it is again renewed, and all the plants, shrubs, and trees, with which it is adorned, put forth new life, and are clothed with fresh beauty. As the sun acquires strength, certain tribes of insects which had long lain concealed in their graves of shell, come forth in a form more gay and brilliant, to range in a wider field of being, and to feed on the sweets of flowers. The grain which is cast into the ground lies buried for a season, decays, and perishes ; and, from this particle of corruption, springs up a stem which bears sixty, or a hundred grains, of equal size and excellence with the original grain that forms the root. If then every thing by which we are surrounded is restored by decaying, and revived by dying, can we imagine that man, who is the lord of this inferior creation, shall be permitted finally to perish in the grave ? Shall Moses, the deliverer of Israel from the Egyptian yoke, so completely effect his work as not to suffer “ a hoof ” to be left behind in the house of bondage ; and shall the great Redeemer of his universal church, permit any of its members, whom he has purchased by his blood, to continue under the dominion of death ? Can we for a moment suppose that God should restore all things to man,

with increased perfection and beauty, and not restore man to himself? “Is any thing too hard for the Lord?” What can elude the ken of omniscience, or defeat the exertions of almighty power? It is only for him to command, and the slumbering myriads of our kind shall start into life and motion, each bearing the impression of his own identity, and fitted for the state to which he is destined. “Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands.”

We may then look forward to the resurrection morn, as the close of the reign of Death. His commission will then be taken from him; the power by which he has swept away successive generations of mankind shall be destroyed; and all the direful instruments he has employed shall be broken. The grave shall give up its precious deposit; and, in the new world which shall become the future residence of the redeemed, “THERE SHALL BE NO MORE DEATH, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”

How surprising the change which shall be effected in the bodies of believers at the last day! There is in the material part of our nature a tendency to dissolution; it is easily racked by

pain, and enfeebled by disease; its senses are the inlets to temptation, and the instruments of sin; it is doomed to all the dishonours of interment, and to pass through the process of putrefaction and decay. No sooner has the spirit, which animated the living form, departed, than *that* form becomes a ghastly spectacle, even to those who viewed it with delight and tended it with affection. The eye which sparkled with intelligence, or beamed with benignity, is now closed; the ear is a stranger to the melody of sound; the voice which inspired confidence, or excited the thrill of love, is no more heard; the cheek, once flushed with the bloom of health, is wan and pale; and every limb is cold and motionless as the frigid marble. We feel reluctant to remain long alone in the room with the clay-cold corpse; nor can we look upon it without the chill of fear. Soon—very soon we commit it to the grave, a damp and solitary dwelling; and here it becomes the prey of corruption and the feast of worms. When a few years have passed, the ashes of our friend are blended with common dust, and lie undistinguished in the heap which covered his poor remains. All that composed it will nourish the soil for the next generation, and may, peradventure, become the means of their subsistence.

And yet from this corruptible material—this

scattered dust, a form shall arise, bright as the sun-beam, and active as light; fitted to be the residence of the beatified soul, and to discharge the duties, and share the enjoyments, of a new and diviner life. It will no longer carry in its constitution the seeds of depravity, disease, and death; nor be the subject of those wants and infirmities which, in the present life, are a hindrance to the Christian in the sublimer exercises of religion: but incorruptible and immortal, it will be superior to the shock of accident and the ravages of time, and qualified, without fatigue or weariness, to serve God day and night in his temple. The state of the raised body of the believer will be that of perpetual youth, unassailed by the common ills of life, and unimpaired by age. Its fair bloom will never wither; its strength know no decay; and its activity continue to increase as it advances towards a higher perfection. The angel seen by the women at the sepulchre of our Lord, when they brought spices to embalm his sacred remains, was in the form of a young man, clothed in a long white garment. Although he had existed for ages, he still retained all the vigour and loveliness of youth: and as white robes were the emblem of victory, they were suited to be worn as commemorative of an event which laid the foundation of the future triumphs and glories of the church. The future life of believers will

be that of angels; and the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, for whom we look, "shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." What the glorified body of Christ is, imagination attempts, in vain, to conceive. When, on Mount Tabor, he was transfigured before his disciples, "his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light:" and when he appeared to John in the Isle of Patmos, such was the majesty of his person, and the splendour of his countenance; that when the venerable Apostle saw him, although on terms of the most endearing intimacy with him while on earth, he fell at his feet as dead. "We shall be like him"—each member of the universal family will bear the impression of the image of their divine Head, and share his glory. How remarkable the expression! "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also *glorified together.*"

Nor is it improbable that this globe of earth on which we tread, the beauty of which sin has marred, will, from the ashes of the general conflagration, be restored to more than its pristine glory, and become the future habitation of the redeemed church of Christ. "For the earnest

expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." In consequence of the sin of man, this whole creation heaves beneath the weight of the curse, bears the impression of vanity, and is devoted to corruption and decay. This, however, is not its final destiny. The ruin that has been brought upon it shall be repaired, and it shall once more take its station in the system of virtuous worlds, and roll to the Redeemer's praise. It stands already in the attitude of hope; and the period for which it is anxiously waiting, as that of its entire deliverance from the direful effects of moral evil, will be the day of the general resurrection, when our bodies shall be redeemed from the grave, and invested with a refined and spiritual nature. In the prophecy of Isaiah, Jehovah has declared, "Behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth; and the former things shall not be re-

membered, nor come into mind:" and Peter, referring to this very passage, says, "we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." All this the Apostle John saw realized in vision. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, 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 he that sat upon the throne said, Behold I make all things new." This new world will as far exceed the old in loveliness, magnificence, and duration, as the heavenly body of the Christian will exceed the earthy. It will be a fit residence for the glorified humanity of the Saviour, and of the universal church. "And death and *hades*," or that portion of the unseen world in which the spirits of the wicked dwell, "shall be cast into a lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever *is* not found written in the book of life *shall be* cast into the lake of fire."

The doctrine of the resurrection wears a



double aspect. Like the pillar of cloud which moved between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel, it is a column of darkness to the wicked, troubling his conscience, and harassing his steps; while it sheds a bright light on the path-way of the just, and discloses to the eye of faith scenes more radiant beyond the tomb. The bodies of the impenitent will rise to shame and everlasting contempt; to be tormented with the devil and his angels. Their very form and visage will doubtless be different from those which distinguish the glorified bodies of the children of God; more resembling the figure and features of the frightful inhabitants of the infernal world, than those of angels of light. As the captain of Pharaoh's guard was commissioned to bring forth from the dungeon the chief butler and baker, the one to be restored to his office, and the other to an immediate and disgraceful execution; so the angel of the resurrection will fetch, from the prison of the grave, the righteous and the wicked—the one to be received into everlasting life, and the other doomed to everlasting destruction.

## CHAPTER IX.

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### *Preparation for Death.*

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Since we can die but once, and after death  
Our state no alteration knows ;  
But when we have resigned our breath,  
Th' immortal spirit goes  
To endless joys, or everlasting woes ;  
Wise is the man who labours to secure  
That mighty and important stake,  
And by all methods tries to make  
His passage safe, and his reception sure.

POMFRET.

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IF there is no escape from the stroke of death ;  
if the moment of our departure is uncertain, and  
may arrive when we least expect it ; and if a  
state of infinite misery, or of infinite blessedness,  
awaits us beyond the confines of the tomb ; of  
how much importance is it that we should be  
habitually prepared for our last great change !  
The Jews were charged, “ Prepare to meet thy

God, O Israel." And every affliction which we feel; every death which takes place in our families, or in our neighbourhood; all the appendages of mortality, by which we are surrounded; the interchange of day and night; the close of one year, and the commencement of another; reiterate the salutary admonition, "therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." Nor do our consciences refuse to acknowledge the propriety of these solemn injunctions, but urge us to seek an immediate fitness for that awful eternity which stretches immeasurably before us.

Heaven, the abode of departed spirits, can never receive into its blessed society, those who are enemies to the character and government of God, and who, in consequence of their rebellion, are children of wrath, and heirs of hell. On its pearly gates we read inscribed in letters of gold, "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." The imperial heavens is a state of the most exalted excellence, and of matchless perfection; it is the seat of the infinite Jehovah, and the theatre on which he displays the brightest glories of his character, and the sweetest effulgence of his grace; it is the home of countless myriads of

angelic beings, and of immortal spirits redeemed from among men, who are eminently capacitated for the service and enjoyment of the Almighty; its constitution, its laws, its employment, like its divine Sovereign, are spiritual and holy; and as well may we think of mingling light with darkness, or vile impurity with unsullied excellence, as of associating men whose hearts are under the influence of depraved principles with the general assembly and church of the first-born. Were such an one to steal into heaven, while all the inhabitants of that world gazed upon him, the leprosy would strike to his forehead: nor would it be necessary for them to thrust him out from thence; but conscious of his pollution, like the smitten king of Israel, he would hasten to go out himself. And as the unregenerate are morally unfit for the new Jerusalem, so they are excluded from it by the righteous sentence of that law whose precepts they have broken, and whose penalty they have incurred. "For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse. For it is written, cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." A consciousness of these facts will imbitter to the sinner the pains of a sick-bed, and fearfully increase the anguish of a dying hour. For a man to feel himself on the point of separation from all that he valued and enjoyed on earth, and to have no other pros-

pect than that of enduring, through an infinity of ages, the unmixed vials of divine wrath, is a situation of awful interest, which may well shake the confidence of the stoutest heart, and turn pale the hardiest countenance.

In order to die safely, it is necessary that we should be raised from a *death* in sin, to a *life* in righteousness. Nor let any suppose that although it is important this change should pass on wilful and notorious transgressors, whose language and conduct are a breach of social order and destructive of social happiness, yet that others whose character is fair and upright, and whose morals have stood the test of public opinion, have no need of conversion. Education may throw a restraint on the evil propensities and corrupt principles of the human heart; and a regard to the common decencies of life, or the dread of future punishment, may give a complexion to the external carriage and behaviour; while the mind is in a state of awful enmity against God, and opposed to his holy and righteous government. Every man, in consequence of the fall of our first parents, brings into the world with him a degenerate nature, prone to that which is evil, and averse to all that is good. As he advances in life, and temptations thicken around him, his depraved principles gather strength, and manifest themselves in a practical

disregard of the revealed will of God, and a want of subjection to the method of salvation through a crucified Redeemer. To give us an idea of the dreadful insensibility of the heart, and its moral indisposition to all spiritual and holy duties, it is declared to be "dead in trespasses and sins." The Scriptures, also, speaking of those who live in pleasure, say, that they are "dead while they live." They are utter strangers to the worth and importance of invisible realities; destitute of all true feeling, being "past feeling;" and have no taste for those refined and substantial pleasures which real religion affords. Objects of sense completely occupy their attention, and command their pursuit, to the neglect of the great and pressing concerns of the soul and eternity. And if, at times, they seem to put forth acts which have some appearance of vitality, these proceed not from a principle of life, but resemble those artificial motions of curious automatons, which are so ingeniously contrived as to counterfeit the movements of living animals.

Such being the state of every human being, of how much importance is it that a new and divine life be imparted to the soul, opening to the understanding all the beauties and treasures of the Redeemer's spiritual kingdom, engaging the affections in the love of unseen and eternal realities, and inclining the will in the ardent

pursuit of them? A principle of grace must be implanted in the soul on earth, qualifying it for the exercises of religion; and this principle must be in a state of constant progression till death, before it can expand and bloom, with perfect vigour and loveliness, in heaven. The change which is effected in the soul of every man on his conversion to God, is called a "resurrection"—"a new creation:" and those who are the subjects of it are said to have "passed from death unto life." It is produced by the power of the Holy Ghost, through the instrumentality of the truth: and it is maintained and increased, by the exercise of faith, uniting the sinner to Christ, and seeking and deriving its supplies from his infinite fulness. Its effects are felt in the formation of a new character, and are seen in a course of holy and universal obedience. The perceptions and views, joys and sorrows, tastes and pursuits, of the happy recipient of divine grace, are so entirely changed, as to justify the expression "a new creature."

Have *we* been made the subjects of a divine and spiritual life? Has the power that raised up Christ from the dead, quickened our souls from the deathly slumbers of sin, and engaged them in a course of new and holy obedience? It stands as a first and indispensable law, under the spiritual reign of the Saviour, "Except a man

be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." An unregenerate sinner is debarred the privileges of discipleship on earth, and will finally be excluded a participation of the happiness and glory of heaven. If we have no solid ground of hope that we have been renewed in the spirit of our mind, may we feel the full force of the Apostolic admonition, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead; and Christ shall give thee life." "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power."

And yet it is not only necessary in order to safety in death that we should be made partakers of a divine nature, and thus fitted for the enjoyment of the heavenly state; but that we should be restored to the inheritance we have lost, by a full *pardon* of the guilt, and a free *discharge* from the punishment, of sin. As criminals, we are dead in law, and under sentence of condemnation, as well as morally alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in us. We have violated the commands of our gracious Sovereign; have forfeited all right to his favour, and all claim to his rewards; and we dread the terror of his frown, and the infliction of his wrath. *That* man cannot be safe, then, who is on the point of entering into the presence of his offended Judge; who has to meet in its full



force the uncanceled indictment of law and justice; who has no plea to urge against the charges which are preferred, or the immediate execution of merited punishment. Reconciliation to God is absolutely essential to a peaceful departure; and it is only to be obtained by the exercise of faith in the righteousness of the Saviour. He it is who has become our peace; and who by the obedience of his sinless life, and the efficacy of his precious death, has made ample satisfaction to the injured honours of the divine government, and opened the gates of heaven to all true believers. As long as we look to any other mode of justification, or depend on any other foundation for pardon and acceptance with God, we are under the curse. "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

It becomes an important question, which every man ought to put to his own heart, Have I fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope which is set before me? Have I renounced every self-justifying plea; abandoned every source of created dependence; and ventured my immortal soul, forlorn, helpless, and guilty, on the all-sufficient atonement of Christ? No other con-

confidence will stand the test of a death-bed, or the scrutiny of the day of judgment. "The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place." Salvation is exclusively connected with the exercise of faith in Christ, humbling the soul for sin and inducing a spirit of contrition on account of it: and while the sinner is taught his own guilt and helplessness, he is led to discover the one sacrifice presented on the cross, and effectually disposed to an entire reliance on its merits for acceptance with God and eternal life. PHILIP HENRY, on his death-bed, and when suffering great pain of body, said to his neighbours who came to see him, "Oh, make sure work for your souls, by getting an interest in Christ, while you are in health; for if I had that work to do now, what would become of me!"

Moreover, the genuine Christian will wish to die *happy* as well as *safe*: and something more is wanting, in order to a joyful and triumphant departure, than the constitution of a new nature, and the exercise of faith in the atonement of Christ. Wherever divine grace is implanted in the soul, although it may be weak in its principle, and feeble in its operation, it will ensure the safety of the man who is the subject of it. It is an incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever: a well of water springing up

into everlasting life. And yet, where the state of religion in the heart is low and imperfect; where its influence is not sufficiently decided on the spirit and the life; and where it does not produce established peace and joy; a cloud is usually thrown over the closing scene, obscuring to the Christian the bright visions of futurity, and impairing his confidence in the truth and promises of God.

An *habitual* and *lively* apprehension of the character and work of Christ, is necessary to a peaceful departure. There is in the best of men so many imperfections, that if we look merely to our own partial sanctification and defective obedience, we must utterly despair of divine mercy. It is only as we can keep our faith steadily fixed on the Redeemer—appreciate the completeness of his righteousness and extent of his atonement—fill our hearts with discoveries of his grace and truth—and realize the benefits of his salvation; that we can “rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.” When once we lose sight of the cross of Christ, and its “sweet wonders” cease to attract and influence our hearts, thrown back for comfort on our own scanty resources, we feel beclouded and impoverished. Our hopes of heaven are never bright—our assurance is never steady and uninterrupted, but when we can rely on the all-

sufficiency, grasp the promises, and partake of the inexhaustible fulness, of Christ. If we desire with Stephen, in our expiring moments, to see the heavens opened and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, like him we should hourly commend our spirits into the hands of our gracious Mediator. The life which we live in the flesh should be by the faith of the Son of God; deriving from him constant communications of pardon, strength, and knowledge; and trusting to the merits of his blood for our acquittal at the last day. As the infirmities of every day will charge fresh guilt on the conscience, we should as often renew our application to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, and seek to be healed by virtue of the Redeemer's stripes.

Habitual faith in Christ should always be connected with *practical holiness*. Sin, whether visible in the conduct, or concealed in the heart, will intercept divine manifestations, and darken our evidences for a better world. Every victory which it obtains is a wound inflicted on the soul, which impairs its spiritual health and appetite, and fills it with fearful forebodings of the wrath of the Lamb. Such was its effect on the Psalmist, that he complains of being feeble and sore broken; not able to look up; and his lips so sealed that he could not sing aloud of God's

righteousness. We have only so far a proof of our discipleship to Christ and title to the heavenly inheritance, as we are perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord—growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—renewed in the inward man day by day—and escape the pollutions that are in the world through lust. Every virtuous principle, every grace of the Holy Spirit, should be in a vigorous and flourishing state, if we desire an abundant entrance into the Redeemer's kingdom and glory. It is not sufficient that they be alive and sincere : in order to our own comfort, and the satisfaction of our friends, these plants of righteousness must be adorned with verdure, and laden with precious fruit. If there has been any secret lust in the bosom, which, like Agag, has been spared, when it ought to have been slain ; any unholy temper, or improper feeling, which has been cherished, when it should have been subdued ; any surprisals into sin, and yielding to the force of temptations, which ought to have been watched against, and resisted ; any motives, inducing a profession of religion, which will not bear the scrutiny of omniscience ; or any deviations from that course of unbending integrity, and strict uprightness, which should mark all our transactions with our fellow-creatures ; they will haunt and distress the mind in the hour of death, and veil from our view the fair visions

of eternal blessedness. At such a moment, when our immortal interests are pending, of how much importance is it that nothing should weaken our evidences of a work of grace in the heart, disturb our peace, or throw a dark cloud over our future prospects!

If we desire to make a death-bed easy, we should take care that our *attachments* to earth be not inordinate. The stronger hold the world has on our affections—the sweeter we feel creature-comforts to be to us, and the longer we make our happiness to consist in the enjoyment of them—the more violent will be the wrench, and the more poignant the pang, at parting. Like the ancient Israelites, we should eat our passover in haste: or, like our Lord's disciples, as we walk through the corn fields, we should pluck the ears of corn, and eat, rubbing them in our hands, still intent on prosecuting our sabbath-day's journey. There are indeed many things in life which have a tendency to divert our attention from the prize of our high calling, and weaken our endeavours to secure it. We are surrounded with temporal mercies; we have friends and relatives whom we passionately love, and in whose society we delight; children, in whom we see many buds of promise, engage our affections; and the schemes of business or advancing reputation which we have formed,

occupy our thoughts and stimulate our ardour. And yet the man who permits his heart to be engrossed by these earthly comforts and engagements, to the neglect of the higher interests of his soul and eternity, is but gathering thorns with which to plant his dying pillow, and forging chains to bind his departing spirit. We are only truly prepared for death, when we can enjoy God in every thing; and when stripped of every thing, we can enjoy all in God.

A traveller who takes a journey of important business, is not so delighted with the scenery of the country through which he is passing as to forget the nature of the engagement that called him from home. He satisfies himself with a transient view of the opening landscape, filled with thoughts of the object he is striving to attain: and all the conveniences with which he is indulged, and the information he can collect, are made to subserve his first and highest purpose. If he meets with pleasant companions, they only serve to beguile the tedium of the way; and the comfortable accommodations which an inn affords, refresh and strengthen him for the remainder of his journey. All he carries about with him, either of wealth or provisions, is intended to accelerate his progress, or supply his wants.

Such ought to be the spirit and conduct of the Christian. His life is a pilgrimage; he himself is a stranger and sojourner as all his fathers were; and heaven is his final home. So long as he is under the influence of divine and spiritual principles, he will, in his daily occupations, declare plainly that he seeks a country. His conversation is in heaven; he sets his affections on things above; and where his treasure is, there will his heart be also. He feels that the fairest spot on earth is all enchanted ground: and while faith forbids his cherishing the idea of fixed residence, his own sense of the deceitfulness of the human heart warns him not to linger on the scene. He endeavours to make all his other business and enjoyments subservient to his spiritual progress, aiming at nothing short of the full salvation of his soul: and, like the angels, while he visits the world occasionally, he *lives* in higher regions, and feeds on more delicious fruits. As he draws nearer to the celestial temple, he desires to catch more of the spirit of its worshippers, and anticipate more of its divine employment; so that his latest thoughts, emotions, and exercises, may harmonize with those which shall be his first in the regions of immortal glory.

In order to meet death with composure, it is desirable that we should make it the subject



of our devout and frequent *meditation*. The more we are enabled to contemplate it, the more it will be stript of its terrors; its ghastly form will be changed into that of an angel of peace; and instead of viewing it merely in the light of judicial punishment, we shall look at it as a necessary mode of departure from a world of sin and misery into one of purity and happiness. It is one of those evils which, to a Christian, is more formidable in the distance than when brought into immediate view: the nearer he approaches it, and the more familiar he is with its attending circumstances, the less dread he will feel both of its visage and weapons. If we are assured that the principle of sin is subdued in the heart, and its guilt is removed from the conscience, death should only be seen as a messenger from heaven, sent to break down the walls of our earthly prison, and setting at liberty the unbound spirit, introduce it to a state of perfect joy and blessedness. The great secret of dying well, is to "die daily;" to have the mind habitually impressed with the awful weight and importance of eternal things, and to act under their influence. It was no mean testimony borne to the character of JOSEPH ALLEINE, an eminent minister of the seventeenth century, that "it might be said of him in as high a degree as of most saints on earth, that each thought was to him a prayer, each prayer a song,

each day a sabbath, each meal a sacrament, and his whole life on earth a foretaste of the eternal repast of heaven." Such a man will not be overtaken by surprise, nor overwhelmed by terror. The more we can rise above the world in our aims, spirit, and conduct, the better prepared we shall be for our heavenly inheritance. Serious thoughts of death tend greatly to direct our present pursuits, and moderate our present joys; to ballast the mind amidst the cares and pleasures of life, and elevate it to the contemplation of unseen and divine realities. It was a proof of no ordinary wisdom in the monarch who commanded his page to knock every morning at the door of his chamber, with this memento, "Remember, prince, that thou must die." We need something to chasten the love of life; to show us the instability, and unsatisfying nature, of all created good; and to remind us of our approaching dissolution. Hence the ancients, on days of festivity, threw ashes into their chalices; the Egyptians had a human skeleton exhibited at their feasts; and the Jews built their sepulchres in their gardens. In the same Escorial where the Spanish princes lived in all the pomp of royalty, and exercised uncontrolled dominion, a splendid cemetery was provided for their slumbering dead; and within the walls of the venerable edifice in which our own monarchs are crowned, lie the ashes of their illustrious ancestors.

“The thought of death alone, the fear destroys ;  
A disaffection to that precious thought,  
Is more than midnight darkness to the soul,  
Which sleeps beneath it, on a precipice,  
Puff'd off by the first blast, and lost for ever.”

Chiefly, however, it is of importance that the Christian keep in vigorous exercise all the *graces* which form his new character, and which were implanted in his heart on conversion. The possession of divine principles will ensure to the believer an entrance into heaven ; but it is only when they are in active and lively operation that he feels a peace which passeth all understanding, and rejoices in hope of the glory of God. In order to a due preparation to meet the Bridegroom, we should have our lamps trimmed and burning, as well as oil in our vessels : and, instead of slumbering out the day of our merciful visitation, we should watch every intimation of our approaching Lord, and keep ourselves in readiness to obey his summons. Nor is it sufficient that we should once have repented of sin, and fled for refuge to the hope set before us : repentance ought to be the business of every day, and faith in the sacrifice of Christ the habit of the soul through life. The more we are sensible of the depravity of our own hearts, and of the infinite evil and demerit of sin, the more deep should be our contrition, and lowly our humility, and fixed our dependence on the perfect atone-

ment of the Saviour. As we sink in self-abasement, and rise in adoring views of the divine perfections and character; as we distrust our own strength, renounce the merit of our own righteousness, and confide in the fulness and sufficiency of Christ; our present enjoyments will increase, and our future prospects brighten. Nor ought we to dream of living with God in heaven, unless we delight in communion with him on earth; nor of contemplating the full vision of his glory in the celestial temple, unless the displays of it in his earthly tabernacles are increasingly precious to us. The nearer we come to the new Jerusalem and the spirits of just men made perfect, the more we ought to assimilate with them in our affections and purposes: and the nearer we approximate to the Sun of righteousness, the more we should reflect the lustre of his beams. Our pace should quicken, and our love glow, and our hope kindle, as we approach the centre of attraction.

Especially ought we to exercise the duty of unreserved *submission* to the will of God. In the immediate prospect of death, nothing is more conducive to our peace, or tends more to the promotion of the divine glory, than an entire and cheerful committing of all our interests into the wise and gracious hands of our adorable Redeemer, so as to be pleased with all that he does,

and willing to follow whither he may lead. The passage through which we are called to walk is indeed chill and dark, and our friends can only accompany us to its entrance—there we leave them, and all that is now most dear to us on earth; and it may be that our descent to the tomb is alarmingly steep, and painfully rugged; but then we have, in these circumstances, the better opportunity of honouring God by an unshaken trust. When the pale horse of Death rings his dark hoofs in our ears, we should be ready to throw up the possessions we most valued in time, and to commit, for eternity, our unclothed souls to Christ, as a precious deposit. And even before the summons arrives—while we are in suspense with regard to the divine purposes respecting us, we should be willing either for life or death, devoutly saying, with David, “Behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.”

When the Israelites had finished their journey through the wilderness, “Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which the Lord your God giveth you to possess it.” The period of *our* earthly sojourn will soon be completed, and the announcement

will be made that we prepare to pass over the cold, swelling river. How desirable, then, that we store the mind with those precious truths which will best succour us in the hour of trial, and that we lay in a large stock of grace for use at that awful moment! Whatever attainments we have made in knowledge or experience, we shall stand in need of all to ensure a peaceful entrance into the land of promise: and even these can only promote a holy confidence, and secure a delightful calm, as they lead the soul to an unsuspecting affiance in the finished work of the Saviour, and the truth of his promises.

“That awful hour will soon appear,  
Swift on the wings of time it flies,  
When all that pains or pleases here  
Will vanish from my closing eyes.

Death calls my friends, my neighbours hence,  
And none resist the fatal dart;  
Continual warnings strike my sense,  
And shall they fail to strike my heart?

Think, O my soul, how much depends  
On the short period of a day;  
Shall time, which heaven in mercy lends,  
Be negligently thrown away?

Thy remnant minutes strive to use;  
Awake! rouse every active power!  
And not in dreams and trifles lose  
This little—this important hour!

Lord of my life! inspire my heart  
With heavenly ardour, grace divine ;  
Nor let thy presence e'er depart,  
For strength, and life, and death, are thine.

O teach me the celestial skill  
Each awful warning to improve ;  
And while my days are short'ning still,  
Prepare me for the joys above."

## CONCLUSION.

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Then since this world is vain,  
And volatile, and fleet,  
Why should I lay up earthly joys,  
Where rust corrupts and moth destroys,  
And cares and sorrows eat?  
Why fly from ill  
With anxious skill,  
When soon this hand will freeze, this throbbing heart lie still?  
KIRKE WHITE.

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THE subject to which our attention has been directed is one of awful interest. It is impossible to feel our individual concern in the event of death, and forebode the results with which it is connected, without having the heart seriously and deeply impressed. In order to produce this impression, we have contemplated it in its most solemn aspects; have traced its rise and progress; and have anticipated its final destruction. And now what remains but that we deduce from the whole some practical reflections?



**FIRST.** In the tendency of every thing around us to decay, we see the *vanity of the world.*

To a man in full health and prosperous circumstances, the spirit of whose mind has never been renewed by the truth nor disciplined by affliction, the world has many attractions. It presents a fair and gilded scene, specious to the eye, and flattering to the heart, of its heedless votary, promising all that can delight the senses, or gratify ambition. Its verdant fields and stately mansions; its adornings and its equipages; its mines of gold and beds of pearls; its chaplets of fame and statues of honour; together with the advantages of polished society and endeared friendship; are so many marks of distinction, and sources of enjoyment, to the worldling. And yet, in truth, how little are they to be valued, either on account of their own intrinsic excellence, or the happiness which they contribute to their possessors. Mutability is stamped on all sublunary good. Wealth is continually changing its masters; and often, when least expected, it takes to itself wings and flies away as an eagle towards heaven. A storm at sea, or a fire on land; a rash and imprudent speculation, or an unsuspecting confidence placed in those who prove themselves unworthy of it; will, in a few hours, destroy the labours

of many years; and he who to-day is surrounded with abundance, and scattering his favours with a liberal hand, may to-morrow be dependent on the charities of others. How many high in station, and commanding extensive influence, have been suddenly hurled from their pedestal of greatness, and doomed to hear the execrations of those who once lavished on them the acclamations of praise! Even monarchs, while dreaming of security, and in the very endeavour of enlarging their territories, have been obliged to exchange a palace for a dungeon, and have learnt, by sad experience, that thrones and sceptres are but shadows of power, and that crowns are fleeting emblems of regal grandeur.

And what are all the pleasures of sense, but so many instruments and occasions of sin, or sources of bitter disappointment and regret? It is not in the nature of any created good to fill the capacity, and satisfy the desires, of an immortal soul. He that enjoys the *most* will only seek to open fresh avenues of animal or intellectual gratification; and if he does not increase the keenness of his remorse, he will add to the weight of his sorrow. The sweets of every flower are soon extracted, and the rill of every comfort soon exhausted; and the enjoyment will either leave a sting behind, or produce vexation of spirit. Solomon was raised to the

highest elevation of earthly dignity; surrounded by all that was captivating to the senses, or alluring to ambition; possessed of ample means of gratifying to the utmost the largest desires of his heart; and, in addition to these things, he was endowed with a noble mind, capable of appreciating and acquiring every branch of knowledge; and yet he looks back on a life of no ordinary prosperity and enjoyment, and exclaims, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

Ah! it is in the season of deep affliction, or in the solemn hour of death, that the world appears in its proper light. At such a moment, all its glories fade on the view, like the departing splendours of a summer's day: and whatever has invited the eye, or engrossed the heart, is only like the pageantry of a public spectacle when passed, or the feigned characters, and deceptive scenery, of a stage. Say, *ye* who have been stricken by disease and led into the chamber of reflection, What was the light in which you saw the objects you once valued, when you were worn down by sickness and convulsed by pain; when the grave seemed to open at your feet, and eternity, with all its awful realities, rose before your frightened imagination? Did you not then feel that you had been treading on enchanted ground, where all around you was ensnaring and illusive; that you had been sailing on treache-

rous seas, full of shoals and rocks, and whose deceitful surface was often raised by the tempest, and tumultuated by the storm; that the world's pleasures could not give you a moment's ease from pain, nor its gold purchase for you an hour's reprieve from the tomb; and that its friends, who had flattered you in health, were ill qualified to administer consolation in death? Especially, say, *ye* who have watched whole nights at the couch of a beloved child; who have seen it wasted by disease and struggling in the agonies of dissolving nature; or *ye* who have bent over the lonely sepulchre, when it has received to its cold embrace the mortal remains of one who was united to you by the endearments of the nuptial tie, and the remembrance of whose virtues even now sheds a hallowed fragrance over the sod which covers his dreary dwelling—say, How did the world appear to you amidst the ravages of death, and the gloomy desolation of the grave? When the ties which bound you to your dearest comforts were cut in sunder, did you not feel your heart-strings break away from the brightest scenes of time and sense; and the blight which withered the fair flower you had reared, or the storm which tore up by the roots the stately tree which had flourished by your side, gave a sad and melancholy tinge to your future prospects! As you slowly departed from the spot which contained

the wreck of all your earthly hopes, you devoutly prayed, "And now, LORD, what wait I for? my hope is in thee."

It is in such seasons as these that the alluring aspect of the world vanishes, and every thing is seen in a new and far different light. And if in affliction and bereavement the scenes of earth lose their bright hue, and a dusky shadow seems to brood over them, what will be their appearance when the world itself shall be dissolved, and all its materials and scenery perish together! —Oh, that we may use the world as not abusing it, knowing that the fashion of it passeth away: and that our daily endeavour may be directed to secure the imperishable and unfading glories of eternity!

SECONDLY. The certainty of death instructs us as to the *value of time*, and the importance of a *due improvement* of it.

We know of no other state of probation than the present: for ought with which we are acquainted to the contrary, it is the only season of spiritual renovation, and of moral culture. The Scriptures apprize us of our peril as *great*—involving in it all that constitutes our first and eternal interests: they speak of it as *immediate*—as that to which we are every moment exposed:

and they announce it as *awful* beyond all possible conception—for it is the verge of irretrievable and endless torment. Of all that we possess, the SOUL is of the highest worth: it alone will survive the ravages of time, the victories of death, and the desolations of the tomb. Its capacity of knowledge and reflection, of suffering and enjoyment, will continue unimpaired, when the material earth and heavens shall be dissolved. As sinners against God, we are criminals under sentence of death; life is but a short reprieve; at any moment the warrant may be issued; and with the loss of natural being, except we repent and are converted, we finally perish. The most ample provision is made for our salvation; the means are within our power; and we are urged by every motive of duty and interest, while it is called to-day, to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure. The machinery on which we stand will soon give way; the curtain which conceals from our view the world of invisibles will be drawn up; the spirits of the departed, and all the solemn insignia of the judgment-seat, will crowd on our mental vision; and without the hope of conversion and pardon, what shall we do in the solemn day? The work of salvation in which we are urged to engage, is a work for eternity. On our failure or success, depends our immortal destiny. Every thought which we conceive,

every word we utter, every action we perform, every motive by which we are governed, and the very temper and frame of our minds, are all contributing to the formation of our character, and will have a direct influence on our future award.

“The time,” says the Apostle, “is short”—contracted, drawn into a narrow space. Some suppose that the metaphor is taken from sails, curtains, or shepherds’ tents, which, when used for the purposes they were intended, are gathered into a small compass. For nearly six thousand years it has been rolled together as a scroll; and soon the volume which has so long been unfolded will be closed. The angel of the Apocalypse, setting his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth, and crying with a loud voice, shall swear by Him that liveth for ever and ever, “There shall be time no longer.”

Still shorter is that small portion of it which bounds our narrow existence. It is swifter than a weaver’s shuttle; it passeth away as the swift ships; it fleeth, also, as a shadow, and continueth not. It is a flood, a flower, a tale that is told, a dream when one awaketh—it is nothing before God. He who has been liberal in all his other gifts, studding the firmament with stars, planting the earth with the richest variety of

herbs and fruits, and filling it with living creatures, and all for the use of man, employs a wise and prudent economy in the distribution of time. He never gives us two moments together: he takes away the first before he imparts the second; and he keeps the third in his own hands, leaving us uncertain whether we shall have it or not. How precious must that boon be, which a God of infinite resources and benevolence bestows with a sparing and cautious hand!

And yet within the compass of this poor dying life, how much is to be done? We have sins to be pardoned, a depraved nature to be renewed, graces to exemplify, relations to sustain, duties to discharge, and immortal souls to be saved! Life and death, blessing and cursing, the joys of heaven and the torments of hell, are set before us; and we are earnestly exhorted to secure the one, and escape the other. We are all borderers on the confines of eternity, and the next moment may thrust us from the shore, and launch us into the profound abyss. One friend disappears after another; you are affected by their loss, and at the instant you resolve to prepare for your own departure, and feel that the summons may shortly arrive. Still you continue loitering and undecided; the spirit of deep sleep has fallen upon you; and while you are active in the



pursuits of sense, you are inert in the affairs of religion. Oh, how many hours which might have been spent in securing the salvation of the soul, and making progress towards heaven, are now irrecoverably lost! How many have been wasted in making provision for the flesh; in adorning the body that must ere long become a mass of corruption, and mingle with its parent earth; in sensual ease and indulgence; and in unnecessary visits and recreations! And every succeeding hour will only lessen the number that remains. It is possible that even now the shadow may be tracing on the dial the last circle of thy narrow life; and ere the sun sets, its lamp may be extinguished. Oh, that from the heart we could present the prayer, "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." How will time mispent affect you in a dying hour, or imbitter the reflections of eternity! We have read of a lady who, when visited by ministers and other Christian friends, in a season of deep mental anguish, despairingly replied to all their words of comfort—"Call back time; if you can bring back time, then there may be hope; but, alas! time is gone." And of another, a female too of distinction, who exclaimed on her death-bed—"All too late; all too late; a world of wealth for an inch of time." If you wish to know the value of time, hear it responded from the couches of the dying, and

the dungeons of the lost! Many of these unhappy men intended to repent of their sins, and embrace the Saviour; and yet before their purposes were put into execution, their days were shortened, and their means of grace withdrawn.

Nor ought you to be less solicitous to improve time, in the earnest endeavour of promoting the conversion of *others*. The relations in which you stand to your fellow-creatures, especially those which arise out of the bonds of nature, lay you under a fearful responsibility to use every mean, and exert every power, in securing the salvation of their immortal souls. While you are hesitating, time is rolling on; and the day of eternity begins to dawn. Death is continually making breaches on the social and domestic circle; and we are left to mourn the loss of those we most loved and valued. Some of our endeared connexions have been removed at a season we least looked for it—either in full health, or in the flower of youth: and such as remain we hold on a most uncertain tenure. And if there be a pang more bitter than another at parting, it is *that* which is inflicted by the thought that our friend might have been better prepared for an exchange of worlds, had we been more assiduous and faithful in the discharge of duty. With what diligence should we have

imparted instruction, and how unceasingly should we have implored that divine influence would accompany it to the heart, had we been more alive to the possibility of his early removal.

THIRDLY. A sense of our mortality should make us *temperate* in the use of present enjoyments, and *moderate* our sorrows.

What is it that gives value to every object that nature or revelation presents to our view? Is it not stability and duration? We prefer gold to crystal, or a ruby to a rose, not because they are more beautiful to the eye, or grateful to the senses, but less fading and perishable. If we estimate, by this rule, the real worth of all our present possessions, how little is there that deserves our attention and regard? While we are pursuing, with avidity, pleasure, substance, or honour, the bauble is in motion, and will either elude our grasp, or mock our expectations when obtained. All the pleasures of life may only be compared to rose-buds, which open their beautiful tints to the morning sun, and shed their fragrance to the evening breeze, and then die and perish. The man who seeks after substance soweth the wind and reapeth the whirlwind: and of the great and mighty it is said, "their pomp must be brought down to the grave, and the noise of their viols; the worm

shall be spread under them, and the worm shall cover them." "And wilt thou set thine heart on that which is not?" Oh, how great the folly of the man who pursues a shadow and neglects the substance; who continually asks "What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Where-withal shall we be clothed?" while he dashes from his famished lips the bread of life and the cup of salvation, and refuses raiment clean and white. When Samuel had anointed Saul to be captain over the Lord's heritage, he sent him to Rachel's sepulchre: and what could have afforded subject of reflection so suitable, at such a moment, as the tomb of one who had been cut down in the flower of her age, when her travail had been compensated by the birth of a son, and when, with her family, she was on the eve of possessing a settlement in the land of Canaan? Nor can we more effectually allay the swellings of pride, or the cravings of desire, than by frequently visiting the graves of our ancestors, and in *their* humiliation contemplating our *own*. The love of the world is placed in direct opposition to the love of God: and where the mind is exclusively engaged in the pursuits of earth, it must be devoid of all habits of holy obedience, and spiritual communion. The less our affections are engaged by the cares of this life, the more at liberty we shall be for acts of piety, and the better prepared to obey the final summons of

our Lord. Many, alas! like self-confident mariners expose too much sail to the wind, not only to the risk of their vessel and cargo, but also of life. If we would not make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, and lose all title to the heavenly inheritance, we should abate our ardour in the pursuits of time, and quicken our diligence in the concerns of eternity.

Nor are we less taught to *moderate our sorrows*. Human life is a chequered scene. If we have had our seasons of enjoyment, we have also had to mourn our hours of affliction and bereavement. Who has not found this world to be a vale of tears, and met with the keenest disappointments even in those relations and possessions that promised the greatest comfort. Since first we entered into life, how many of the companions of our youth have been torn from our bosoms and carried to their long home? and the few that remain to counsel and solace, we hold on a most uncertain tenure: what changes have taken place in our persons and circumstances, and in those of our dearest earthly friends? and how painfully have we been taught the lesson that all creature dependencies are wandering clouds, and wells without water? Never—never can we forget the hour when our pleasant gourds, struck at the root, began to wither; when one foundation after another of

earthly happiness gave way, and we felt as if all the ground on which we stood were moving sands. Oh, the wormwood and the gall of such—and such an affliction—cannot be forgotten, so long as memory holds her seat in our bosom.

And yet has not the trial been alleviated by the thought that the pains and sorrows of this dying life will soon be over. The cloud, though dark, will vanish, and the storm spend itself; and perpetual sun-shine will be enjoyed. Whenever the Scriptures speak of the sufferings of the saints, it is in language best suited to encourage us. The sacred writers carefully avoid using the words ages, years, or even months, lest such terms should throw a gloom over our minds, and cool the ardour of our hopes: but they tell us of a *day* of adversity; a *night* of affliction; an *hour* of temptation; a *moment*—a *small* moment of desertion. Light afflictions are contrasted with a weight of glory; and momentary sufferings with an eternity of blessedness. Oh, could we keep these facts in mind, and feel their full influence on our hearts, how would it cure our restless anxiety, and silence our unavailing regrets? Instead of being distracted with care, or vexed with disappointment, or unduly depressed with the losses or sufferings of life, we should consider them only as present inconveniences, attached to a vain life which we

spend as a shadow, and which cannot affect our true and highest happiness. When Philip, king of Macedon, threatened to bring upon the Spartans great national calamities, they nobly replied that he might destroy their commonwealth, but he could not hinder them from dying. And the Christian, on better principles than the Spartans ever knew, may reflect on the tomb as a quiet resting-place; and, in the act of departure, may anticipate a peaceful termination to the natural ills, and spiritual conflicts, of his short, yet painful pilgrimage.

FOURTHLY. The subject teaches us the supreme *importance of religion*.

If the reality of religion be admitted, and its nature understood, nothing, in comparison with it, will appear to be of such inconceivable moment. We feel that we are rational and accountable beings; that we are the subjects of a moral government, wise, benevolent, and holy; and that we inherit a nature averse to its equitable and salutary claims. We find ourselves surrounded by other beings, endowed with like faculties and engaged in like pursuits; and out of those relations in which we stand to each other, arise reciprocal obligations and duties. Our state in the world is strictly probationary; and the many temptations to which we are

exposed are intended as a trial of principle and a test of character. And what, except religion, will counteract the evil tendencies of our depraved nature; induce us to yield to our rightful Sovereign the love and obedience which he demands, and conscientiously discharge the obligations we owe to our fellow-men; and effectually preserve us from the many snares and fatal dangers with which the devious paths of life are thickly planted? Religion, not indeed as consisting in forms and opinions, but as a vital, spiritual principle, existing and operating in the heart, will best influence our spirit, and direct our conduct. By making the tree good, it ensures corresponding fruit; by purifying the fountain, it cleanses the streams, and gives to them a salutary influence. When the power of evangelical motive is felt, and a habit of piety formed, duty becomes pleasant and easy, and our acquiescence in the divine will cheerful and entire.

If religion is important to the proper discharge of the duties of life, how much more essential is it to our consolation in death, and happiness in eternity! What, at that dread hour, can extract the barbed arrow of sin from the conscience, but a sense of reconciliation to God, through the death of his Son? What can dispose to submission, when languishing with disease, or



convulsed by pain, but a filial confidence in the wisdom and goodness of Him who feeds his people with the bread of tears, and giveth them tears to drink in great measure? When we are about to leave the world, and separate from beloved connexions, what can dim the lustre of the one, or gently loose the ties which bind us to the other, but the hope of a fairer inheritance, more perfect, and more enduring society? What can embolden us, when we enter into the immediate presence of the Judge of quick and dead, and feel ourselves surrounded by the spirits of the departed, and the ministers of heaven, but the sweet assurance of pardoned guilt, and the visible evidence of a renewed and sanctified heart? And what can qualify us for a residence in the mansions of the blessed, or fit us to engage in the employments of the redeemed, but the possession of a new and divine nature? Men, while living, may treat religion with indifference, and scoff at those who profess it; and yet, in a dying hour, they will see its reality and importance, and bitterly bewail their want of it. When every object they valued in the present world is receding from them, and they feel that they have no further hold on the things which gratified or profited them, religion will appear, as it truly is, the only pursuit worthy the attention and anxiety of an immortal soul. The reflection that they once possessed the means of

obtaining it, but neglected to improve them, will give poignancy to the stings of an accusing conscience, and add to the regrets of eternity. How will they lament their folly while they hear the Saviour exclaim, in the melting strains of pity, "O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea." Many things which we value, and which we are solicitous to secure, are, in truth, of little worth. A large share of earthly prosperity; a state of uninterrupted health; the smiles of friendship, and the greetings of the world; are not essential to the creature's happiness. But a new and holy nature; reconciliation to our offended Sovereign, and habitual communion with the Father of our spirits; peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost; the powerful and practical influence of religious principles, disposing us to patient submission and active obedience;—these are blessings indispensably necessary to our happiness in both worlds. However we may neglect or despise it, RELIGION is "the principal thing," and our main concern in life should be to secure it. "Seek ye FIRST"—as a matter of the highest importance—"the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all things" necessary to the body "shall be added unto you."

FIFTHLY. Amidst the darkness and disorder which sin has brought into the world, how consolatory is the *gospel of Jesus*, and how bright the hopes which *divine revelation* inspires!

We look around us, and every where we witness the sad effects of our first father's fall. This earth, which was once a Paradise, is now the seat of anarchy and confusion, of toil and wretchedness, of desolation and death. Where the myrtle blossomed, and the rose shed its sweetest fragrance, there spring the thorn and the thistle: and instead of verdant fields and amaranthine bowers, a wild and trackless desert, over which the cloud spreads, and the storm gathers, rises to our view. Man himself, the inhabitant and the lord of this lower world, bereft of his original dignity, has become the subject of depravity and guilt, and is doomed to present sorrow, and, without repentance, to future everlasting misery. He feels that sin has rendered him a mourner on earth, and a miserable outcast from heaven; and has unfitted him for the enjoyment and service of the great Supreme. One link of his social happiness is broken after another; the basis on which he has built his fairest hopes of sublunary good gives way; and he himself, the child of mortality, is spending as an hireling his day.

Were our views and expectations confined to the world in which we live, how dreary would be the prospect! Laborious, disappointed, unhappy, we should die without hope, and perish without remedy. After years of toil and suffering, we should lie down in sullen despair, and see the wreck of our few remaining comforts, and nothing to compensate for the loss beyond the grave. Such, however, is not the condition of man. The light of revelation breaks through the gloom by which he is surrounded; throws its rays across the dark passages of death; and opens a vista through which he may discern brighter regions, and a more enduring inheritance. Nor do the Scriptures leave us in uncertainty with regard to the nature of that world into which believers enter at death. They describe it as a state of incomparable glory and excellence; not only as free from imperfection and sorrow, but as replete with the highest possible blessedness; as a social state, in which the saints shall enjoy sweetest intercourse with all its inhabitants, and be admitted to near access to Him who is "the first-born among many brethren;" as a state of incessant activity and progressive improvement, and the duration of which cannot be affected by the vicissitudes of nature, or the revolution of ages. They point out the way in which we may secure our lot in the purchased possession; urging us to faith in

Christ for the pardon of our sins, and reception into the divine favour ; and exhorting us to pray that the Holy Spirit may impart unto us a moral meetness for the kingdom of heaven. When bending over the tomb which has just received the mortal remains of all that was dearest to us on earth, they assure us that the spirit that so lately animated the lovely form still lives, and that from the mouldering ashes of our friend, a new and spiritual body shall be raised, fitted to be the imperishable residence of his glorified and immortal soul. The pang of separation is assuaged by the hope they afford that we shall soon meet the companion of our earthly sojourn again ; and that in *that* happy world which is the final home of the redeemed, sin and the curse shall be unknown, and the whole family in heaven continue unwasted by disease or age, and unbroken by the ravages of death. And when we ourselves shall languish on the couch of sickness, or agonize on the bed of death ; when all around us wears a sable aspect, and imagination is presenting to the mind still more gloomy images ; the volume of divine revelation irradiates the scene by the bright visions of hope, while it pours into the bosom of the believer the stream of present consolation and established peace.

“ O CHILD of sorrow, be it thine to know  
That Scripture only is the cure of woe !

That field of promise, how it flings abroad  
Its perfume o'er the Christian's thorny road!  
The soul, reposing on assured relief,  
Feels herself happy amidst all her grief,  
Forgets her labour as she toils along,  
Weeps tears of joy, and bursts into a song!"

Dr. LEECHMAN, late principal of the college of Glasgow, at the close of life, thus addressed the son of a nobleman, who was designed for the church, and the early part of whose education he had superintended. "You see the situation I am in: I have not many days to live: I am glad you have had an opportunity of witnessing the tranquillity of my last moments. But it is not tranquillity and composure only; it is joy and triumph; it is complete exultation." His features kindled, his voice rose as he spoke. "And whence," said he, "does this exultation spring? From that book"—pointing to a Bible that lay on the table—"from that book, too much neglected indeed, but which contains invaluable treasures! treasures of joy and rejoicing! for it makes us *certain* that *this mortal shall put on immortality.*"

When compared with the disclosures of divine revelation, all the discoveries of philosophy are ill fitted to furnish consolation and hope to beings, whose life in this world is a moment, and whose end is the grave. To this dark and

desolate habitation, man, by the twilight of nature, looks forward in despair, as his final home. All who have gone before him, have pointed their feet to its silent chambers; and not one of them returned, to announce that an opening has been discovered from their dreary residence to some other more lightsome and more desirable region. His own feet daily tread the same melancholy path. As he draws nigh, he surveys its prison walls, and sees them unassailable by force, and insurmountable by skill. No lamp illumines the midnight within. No crevice opens to the eye a glimpse of the regions which lie beyond. In absolute despair, he calls upon Philosophy to cheer his drooping mind; but he calls in vain. She has no consolations for herself; and can therefore administer none to *him*. 'Here,' she coldly and sullenly cries, 'is the end of man. From nothing he sprang: to nothing he returns. All that remains of him is the dust, which here mingles with its native earth.'

“ At this sullen moment of despair, Revelation approaches, and with a command at once awful and delightful, exclaims, LAZARUS, COME FORTH! In a moment, the earth heaves, the tomb discloses, and a form, bright as the sun, and arrayed in immortality, rises from the earth; and, stretching its wings toward heaven, loses

itself from the astonished sight." A new heaven and a new earth, also, start into view, composed of costly and imperishable materials, and adorned with all that can give beauty and magnificence to the scene. As it will be the last, so it will be the noblest, of God's works; the very perfection of divine contrivance and power; and the fit residence of the Saviour, and his redeemed family. The reign of truth without error, of holiness without imperfection, and of happiness without alloy, commences; and from the azure canopy of heaven the universal song resounds, **WORTHY IS THE LAMB THAT WAS SLAIN TO RECEIVE POWER, AND RICHES, AND WISDOM, AND STRENGTH, AND HONOUR, AND GLORY, AND BLESSING.**

“ O thou great Arbiter of life and death!  
 Nature's immortal, immaterial sun!  
 Whose all-prolific beam late call'd me forth  
 From darkness, teeming darkness, where I lay  
 The worm's inferior; and, in rank, beneath  
 The dust I tread on; high to bear my brow,  
 To drink the spirit of the golden day,  
 And triumph in existence: and could'st know  
 No motive but my bliss: and hast ordain'd  
 A rise in blessing! with the Patriarch's joy  
 Thy call I follow to the land unknown:  
 I trust in thee, and know in whom I trust:  
 Or life or death is equal; neither weighs;  
 All weight in this—O LET ME LIVE TO THEE !”

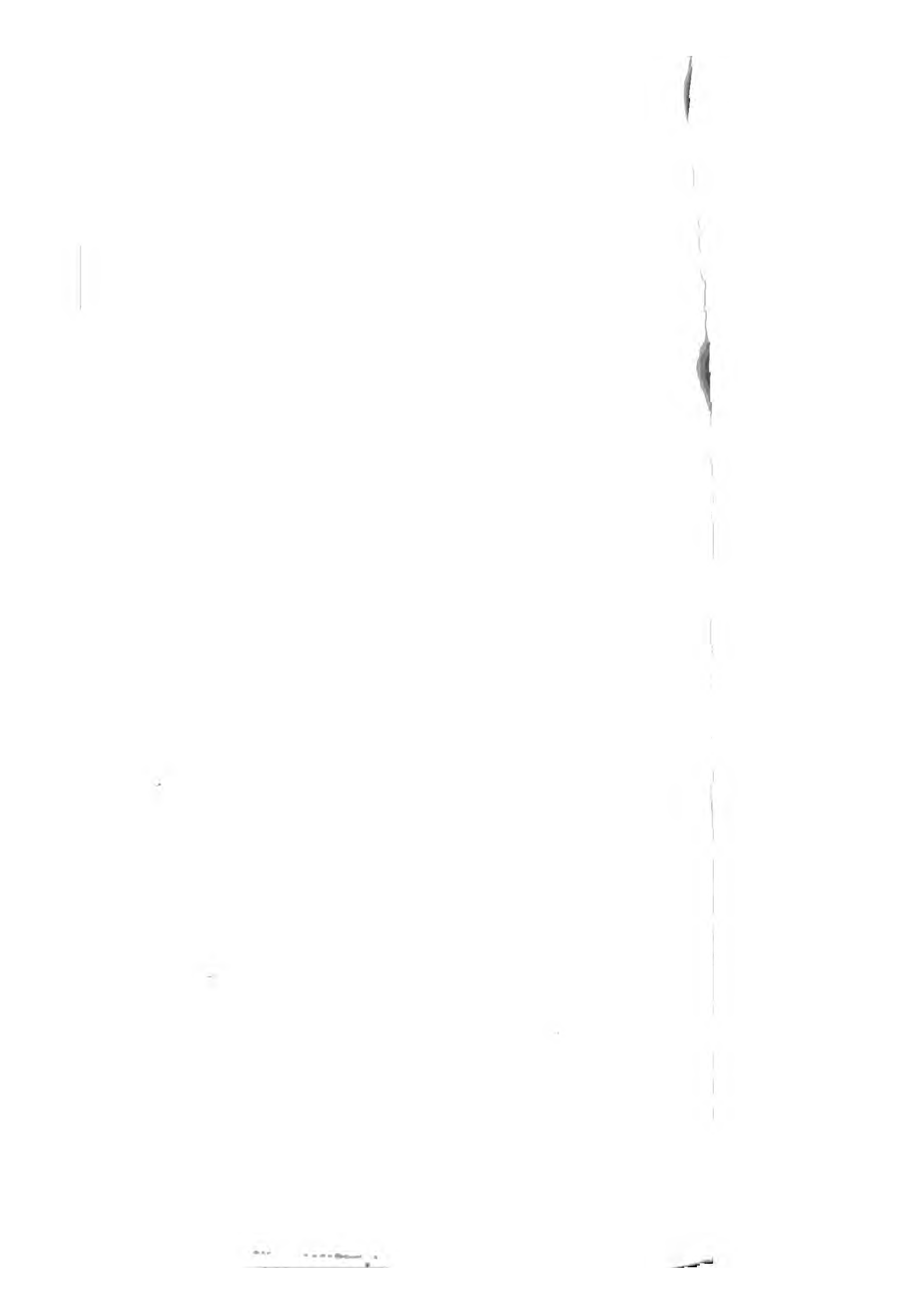


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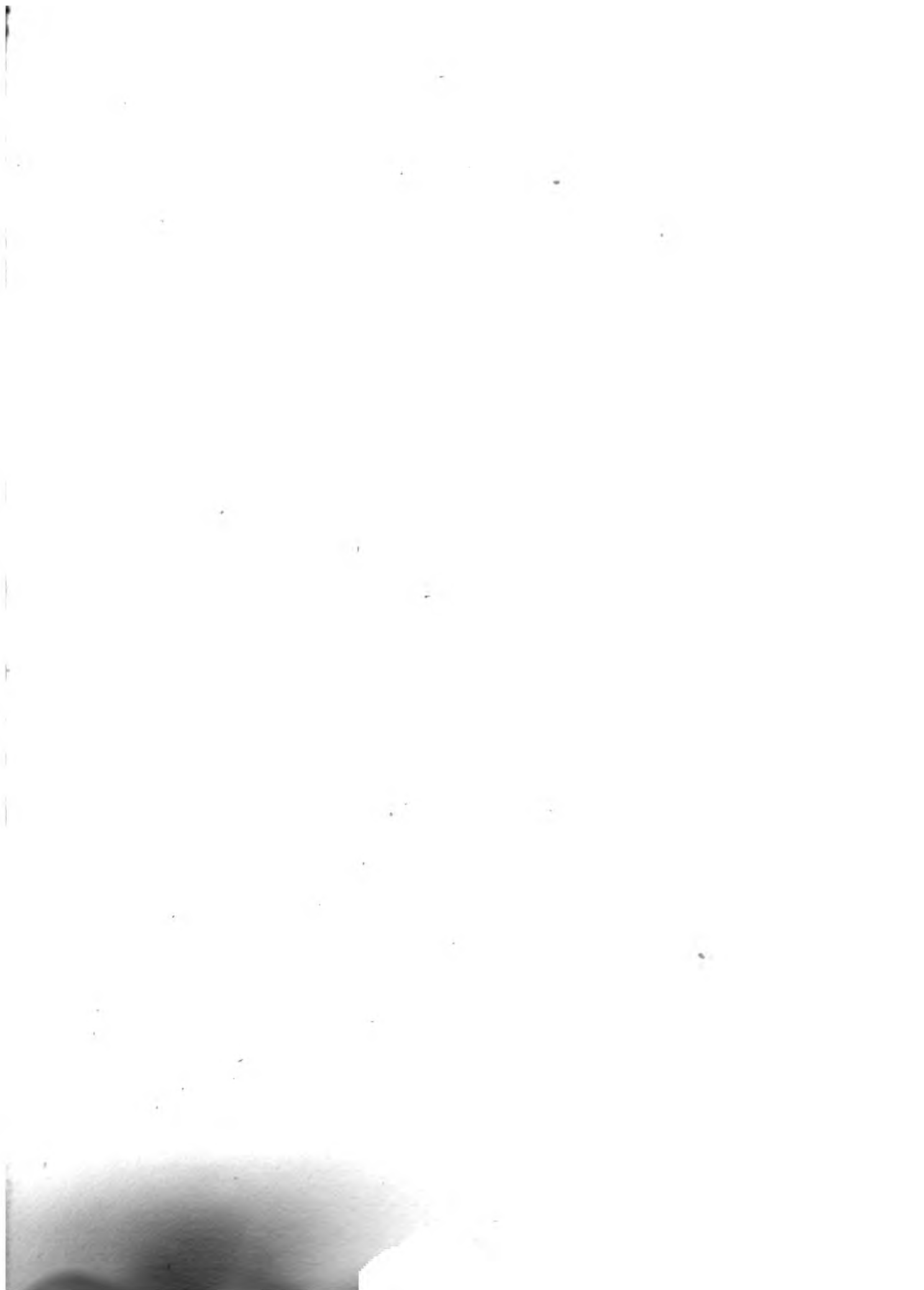
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