

somewhere. All this ought assuredly to fill us with thoughtful fear. If any say "We know nothing of all this," how oppressive the ignorance! If any dread fulfilment, they do so with a fear that hath torment. If any believe and hope and rejoice in its accomplishment, there must also be something of great awe in the very anticipation of perfect being, and of complete union with Christ in God through endless ages. If we only contemplate the things we say we believe, we shall be prepared to receive truly this word of consolation from the lips of the Risen Jesus, "Fear not!"

III.—HE HAS THE KEYS OF DEATH.

He alone therefore determines when a man shall die. The life of each person is absolutely under His control. How long we are each to live, on what day, hour, and minute, it will be said of us by mourning friends, "He is gone!—my friend, my father, my husband, my wife, my child, my brother or sister, is dead—they died of such a disease, lingering or rapid"—all is determined by Jesus Christ, by the Man Who lived among us, and Who was once the artisan of Nazareth. Every one on the battle field is under His control. Every wave that curls its monstrous head over the mariners struggling to the shore, is held by His hand; the winds and the waves obey Him. The epidemic that seems to be under no law, the mysterious disease which science cannot comprehend or remedy, the fatal accident that hurries men into the unseen, without a warning—the very moment in which each of the thousands who die daily must depart—all obey His command. He opens the gate to each and says, "Enter!" or shuts it and says, "Not yet!" The key of that sombre door is turned by Him alone, as wise men and fools, kings and beggars, masters and slaves, must enter or wait, as He pleases. I do not wonder men should doubt and disbelieve! It is so unlike all we are accustomed to think.

But so is it with all God reveals; and in such cases the doubt that springs from a sense of novelty, may be nearer truth than the indifference of merely professed faith.

IV.—HE HAS "THE KEYS OF HADES."

Where is it? How lives therein that society of which our friends form a part? What are they doing just now? what thinking? what remembering? Thus we ask in vain about those who were once to us as a part of our own existence! But so will others perhaps ask, and may be soon, of ourselves. We cannot obtain any reply from the most loving and intelligent. We might as well question the stars about their inhabitants. But nevertheless, how very real is their life in the unseen world! It was not so thoughtful, or earnest, while they lived here. The things which were once to them of importance are nothing to them in that kingdom beyond, except such as are of importance everywhere and in every place. What care they for the money market, or the state of trade, or human opinion, or what this coterie or that thinks or believes? Now Jesus is acquainted minutely with every inhabitant of that unseen world. He was there Himself. For He was once *dead*, and descended into that Hades of which He has the keys. When He said to the thief on the cross, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise," He witnessed to a common life, which He shared with every man for a time in the home of departed spirits!

To all who receive Him, and trust in Him, and take Him for life and death, it is a blessed thought in looking forward to the death of ourselves or others—both of which we naturally dread and shrink from—that Jesus has its "keys." He, your brother, your friend, bone of your bone, who knows all about you and your family, "was dead," and knows what death is, and pain, and torture. He knows what it is to part with a mot-