

of my children's souls whom I have neglected, whom by my bad example I have ruined, louder than the blood of Abel penetrates the heavens; save me, O God, for I am straitened on every side; encompassed by my enemies, each year sends forth its hideous witnesses and accusers—thronging and thronging still. My God, what am I to do?" And the sinner sunk exhausted on his pillow, and fierce was the struggle of his soul that night. Unlike the sinner of whom St. Gregory writes, who, seized at night, by a mortal malady, prayed, "O God! O great God! some few days, my God! my God! some few moments O God! O God! life till to-morrow—for to-morrow only, and he obtained it not," this sinner lived. Convulsed and agonized he counted the lingering hours. The morning rose in all its clearness and freshness, but it did not dissipate the phantoms of the night, nor cool the fevered temples of the dying one. The clock within his chamber told its heavy repetitions, answering to the approaches of eternity. He demanded, "is the confessor yet come?" and the confessor was announced to him. He went as well as he could through the confession of his sins, and fixing, at its termination, an anxious look upon the countenance of his confessor, he asked—"Do you think there is mercy for me?"—"I have come as the minister of God's mercy, not of his justice; I announce to you but mercy." But can mercy shine on one like me, upon whom years of darkness rest, and iniquities multitudinous?"—"I tell you, in the words of God, that though your sins outnumbered the hairs of your head—the stars of heaven—the sands of the sea, you will be forgiven if you are truly penitent."—"But am I truly penitent? Penance, like every other act, to deserve credit before God or man, must be voluntary—free. But is this a voluntary repentance—is it not forced upon me by the most tremendous of all necessities? When I was well, and God would thank me, I did not do it; and will He thank me now? I have heard of death-bed repentance, and I know that all men in my situation, if in their senses, will call, as I do, for pardon, and if that could save them, all would be saved, which is against the Scripture. Priest of the living God, can you suggest no means of safety?"—"Look to Jesus Christ: it is written that 'those who believe in him shall not perish, but shall have life everlasting.'" O Jesus! I have lived but for the world—not for thee; I have lived but to forget thee. Is it not written, that I should die as I have lived? It is now too late."—"But it was not too late for the penitent thief."—"No, but St. Ephrem says truly, that 'that was not his last but his first hour'—his first call to grace: he obeyed it, and was saved; nor do I forget the remark of St. Augustine, speaking on death-bed repentance: 'One was saved that none might des-

pair, but one only that none might presume'—the blood of Jesus, though it pleaded in that redeeming hour did not save the unhappy being who hung in tortures by his side."—"But he did not believe in Jesus; he derided and blasphemed."—"And what has my life been but a mockery, a living blasphemy? Believing, and yet outraging, is worse than the scorn of the unbelieving Jew."—"Do you then despair of your salvation?"—"O, no; that would be the crowning ingratitude of all; I must hope—I do! but my reason totters on its throne in discovering the justification of such hope: I tremble to my centre, and I fear to die. O that I could live over again! O that God would raise me up again to shew the sincerity of my sorrow, to deplore the blindness of the past! But a few years, O God, and I will love thee, serve thee! Have mercy, Jesus!—Jesus, mercy!" And he raised his attenuated hands, convulsively, entreatingly, to heaven. It was the last effort of exhausted nature, and they fell back heavily upon his couch. The change that came over his pallid features told his confessor that his hour was come. He anointed him with oil in the name of the Lord—he prayed the prayer of faith to save him—he breathed into his ear the name of Jesus—he repeated the orisons of the dying; and, as he watched those eyes, so wildly floating upwards, and sometimes fixed, as if they would explore the destinies of another world, he thought, may not such desolation move even still omnipotence to mercy? But then would come eternal promises and blighted years, and the blood of Jesus violated; and as the bosom of the dying man rose in its last momentous parturition, he exclaimed, "God have mercy on him—he is dead!" He might have added, in an instant, he is judged; he is dead and judged; is his soul lost or saved? Answer it, ye speculators in eternity—if even ye do speculate therein: ye wild adventurers in a perilous game—would you stake an eternity of happiness or misery upon his chances; but will you allow eternity to be dependent upon his? Can you think that one cry for mercy when he could not help it will be a sufficient expiation for a whole life of sin?

Men of reason, if not of religion, think, and determine, and begin, for the hour is coming for all and each of us, either of final victory or irretrievable defeat! For you, my brethren, I humbly pray that your flight may not be in the winter, surrounded by snows and storms, and unproductiveness and torpor: "O may it be rather in the summer, when the sun is shining, and the earth rejoicing, and the foliage and flowers and fruits of a good life are around you, that so you may pass into the ever verdant lawns of Paradise, and enjoy the eternal Sabbath of the rest of God! Amen.