

unnerved the mind, and it seldom fails to produce a salutary effect. With this brief preamble let my tale commence. May it act as a warning; to such as are prone to make unto themselves idols among the creatures of dust! to such as love the creature more than the Creator.

At the age of twenty years I was left a widow, with an infant son. The loss of a cherished and beloved husband, fell, like an avalanche upon my young and untried heart. For a long time my grief was too great to admit of consolation, nor do I remember having ever received positive comfort from any source. My anguish was too acute for calm endurance, and exhausted itself in unchecked paroxysms. These became less frequent as time brought its never failing mitigation to poignant sorrow, and I gradually gained composure, though not cheerfulness. Indeed, it was my maxim that real grief can never be overcome; that true sensibility defies control. I unhesitatingly pronounced all people to be cold hearted who bore their afflictions unrepiningly. Nothing exasperated me more than to be told by my friends that they were pleased to find I was conquering my inordinate sorrow. To these I always replied sternly, true sorrow can never be conquered; those who love as I did must grieve forever.—Cold hearts may talk of subduing their feelings—where they are really strong they are unconquerable. Such sophistry convinced my own reason, though I was all this time a professing Christian. I read my Bible with due attention, and heard the doctrines of Christianity ably expounded from the pulpit. I thought myself in the safe path of Christian practice, when I resisted the will of Providence with vehement complaints, and avowed murmurs against its decrees.

Meanwhile, my son grew like a well watered plant before my eyes. He was a singularly lovely and intelligent child. Yet I never thanked the Giver of this precious gift, but complained loudly that my happiness was blighted in the bud. My child evinced strong passions from his very cradle, and some of my best friends urged me to check their violence from the commencement. But my constant reply to this salutary counsel was: how can you impose such a task upon a broken hearted creature? Do you not see plainly that I am incapable of any such exertion? Alas! every attempt to speak harshly to my child, would open the fountain of my griefs afresh. He is the living semblance of his father! how can I impose restraints upon such an infant without being guilty of positive cruelty. Ah! it is for cold-hearted people to talk of discipline. The very word brings to my mind chains, fetters and all the horrid implements of tyranny. My only comfort is to indulge this cherished being in every thing; I cannot cross either his wishes or his passions. Besides I see clearly that he has a heart overflowing with sensibility. To check what you call passion, would be to destroy the fine feelings of his heart. I cannot consent to an experiment which might counteract all the noble propensities of his nature.

Thus did I discharge the duties of a Christian mother. My only excuse for nourishing an idolatrous attachment to my son was, that my conjugal affections having been nipt in the bud, all my repressed feelings must needs flow into the newly opened channel of maternal love. Years passed away, and my lovely boy was approaching his tenth year. At this period a malignant disease visited our village, and was peculiarly fatal to children of his age. Many were carried off by it, and I was surrounded by mourning parents. My mind was thrown into a state of disorder which can scarcely be explained in words. I felt agonizing sympathy with the afflicted, but I never could realise an apprehension that their doom might become mine. No, I had a vague idea connected with my notions of heavenly goodness, that I had borne my full burden of sorrow, and should not again be tasked so heavily. That, in short, I was to be spared now, nay, had almost a right to claim exemption from future trouble, because I had been already borne to the earth by one surpassingly heavy stroke. Although I knew many widows, some struggling under complicated adversities, some called to suffer this new grief by my very side, yet I never compared my case with theirs. A strange idea possessed my mind that my having mourned so deeply over one sorrow, was to give me a title of exemption from another. Thus, I laboured

under the miserable delusion of supposing that my self-indulgence was to be rewarded by the future forbearance of Heaven.—That the All-merciful would spare one who had shown such keen sensibility, and such an incapacity to bear sorrow. Alas! what will not self-love devise to save itself from conviction and condemnation.

One night I was appalled by signs of indisposition in my child; I passed the night in agony by his bed-side, in tears and incoherent supplications. At day-break I summoned medical assistance, and fell into a swoon, when the physician gently communicated his apprehension that the epidemic had seized my idol. On my recovery I turned from a well meaning old friend who was whispering lessons of resignation in my half insensible ear. Talk not of resignation, said I, almost fiercely, that virtue may belong to the poor in spirit and the cold in heart. I never could, and never can be resigned; when my adored husband died he carried more than half my existence with him; the rest was only sustained by love for his child.—If he is to go, rely on it, grief will carry me off before him. When I know to a certainty that he is to be taken, I shall go before him. My heart was not made for endurance. It can break, but not bend. My old friend sighed, but said no more.

The progress of my son's illness was inconceivably rapid. I could see that almost every body around me thought it a desperate case. Yet my strange feeling of security remained. I prayed incessantly, with almost frantic impetuosity, that this cup might pass by me, but I shrank vehemently from the closing sentence of the blessed prayer. The fact was, that I never had attempted to submit to the will of my Creator, nor could I bear to dwell upon the idea that submission was an imperious Christian requisition. At length my child's illness reached its climax, and I was gently and with tender sympathy informed that his recovery was hopeless. What! said I, starting wildly from my seat, do you mean impudently to set bounds to the mercy of God? Who shall dare affirm that my child cannot yet be raised from his dying bed? I have asked it in faith; let us all pray for his recovery. Yes, as surely as we are permitted to ask that we may receive, so surely may the only son of his mother, and she a widow, be saved from death; let us all unite in prayer for my precious boy. A clergyman of approved piety was present. I besought him to lead our intercessions, and cast myself with a frantic gesture upon my knees. All who were present bent humbly before God, and the voice of prayer arose amid almost breathless attention. The holy man prayed with earnest and touching fervour; he besought the Lord to have pity upon the widowed mother; to spare her only child to be a comfort to her future days. He asked forgiveness for all our sins in the name of the blessed Saviour, and spoke of the gracious promises of heavenly mercy, like one who had hitherto confided wholly in their sustaining power. His voice softened as he spoke of a mother's love, stronger than death—of the blessed privilege of intercessory prayer, so often the solace of human misery at its most awful crisis. He dwelt on the omnipotence of God, and of his infinite mercy which so often prompted the exercise of that boundless power. Nevertheless, added he, if it should be thy will to take this much loved sufferer from a world of sin and misery, Oh, grant thy fullest grace and most powerful strength to the bereaved parent; uphold her in her hour of keenest anguish, grant her resignation.—Stay, exclaimed I, half frantic with mental agony, ask not for resignation, I do not desire to be resigned if I must lose my darling; I ask nothing of Almighty power, but that my grief may be permitted to destroy me speedily—say nothing of my resignation, but ask the life of my child. If the Scripture be true, the prayer of faith will raise the sick, nay even the dead. This strange unholy interruption of the general devotions seemed to appal my assembled friends. The clergyman remained silent for some moments, then concluded his prayer in a lower tone of voice.

Reader! this prayer so vehemently urged—so presumptuous in its requisition, was heard and answered. The inscrutable wisdom of the Most High answered a petition which contained no humble reference to His will. My child arose from his bed of suffering, and became once more the light of my eyes—the joy of my

heart. There were some who ventured to whisper that they thought me worthy of this blessing. A signal mercy—almost a miracle had been granted to one who declared herself unwilling to let the will of her Father in Heaven be done. Did not this savour of presumption! For myself, I exulted in what I regarded as the triumph of faith; but mark the sequel. This idol of an erring and presumptuous heart; this child who was dearer to me than my hopes of heaven, lived to be the scourge of a miserable existence. Yes, he grew up to manhood with a person like the fallen Lucifer, beautiful even in its degradation.

But every vice that ever polluted the earth rioted and triumphed in his bosom. He lived—a heaven-defying sinner; was arraigned again and again before the tribunal of human justice, and escaped again and again by the subtleties of legal subtlety.

But the cup of his iniquities was at length full. Without a dream of penitence—without a thought of repentance, he cast defiance in the teeth of justice; challenged the wrath of an avenging God, and swore away his last breath on a scaffold.

Say! ye who have bent submissively over the dying bed of a cherished babe! who have mourned the early dead with child-like resignation to a Father's will, say would you exchange conditions with the unhappy being whose story is before you? Learn from it that God sometimes spares in his just anger what it would have been mercy to have removed.—*So. Churchman.*

RELIGIOUS LITERATURE.

THE MINISTER'S DEATH-BED.

Oh! that death-bed scene! On earth there is nothing like it? Whether the monarch or philosopher die, there is no thrill of agony or delight felt in other worlds like that created by the departure of the minister of God from the scene of his mighty responsibilities. Almost can the eye of sense discern the scroll in the hand of the recording angel, bearing on its flaming page the deeds of the summoned spirit, and the forthcoming sentence—"Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!"—or "Bind him hand and foot and cast him into outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth for ever."

The gay drapery of the world falls off—the airy fancies that had filled his imagination vanish away; and the material universe, like a naked skeleton, stands out before him bearing on its front, in broad capitals of lurid light, the oft-forgotten truth—"Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!"

Around him mingle the angels of light, and the fiends of darkness. Heaven opens. Hell discloses its fiery deep. All is solemnity, now—whether "the angel of mercy" bear the spirit triumphantly upward, or despair seize its victim, and drag him downward to the realms of endless night! But then comes the day for which all other days were made—when the good man and the mean, the mighty man and the slave, the priest of the altar and the door-keeper of God's house, shall stand together before the bar of eternal judgment.

"O, my soul, hast thou fought the good fight, and kept the faith—has the word of God been within thee as a burning fire, shut up in thy bones—hast thou conducted others through tears and prayers up to heaven's gates—have none perished through thy negligence, and love of ease, and fear of man; canst thou meet the Judge of all, and appeal to him that none have stumbled over thy bad example, formality of service, vain glory, and ambition in the world of wo? Hast thou no accusers there, who will testify—"You saw me in the way to hell and held your peace—you knew me to be thoughtless, and did not warn me—to be presumptuous, and did not rebuke me—to be entangled in the mazes of error and vicious indulgence, and did not extricate me—if you spoke it was but flattery—if you smiled, it was to secure favor—if you labored, it was but for the meat that perisheth!" "Ah me! what cursing then is heaped upon my head by ruined souls that charge me with their murder!"—*Rev. Dr. Storr's Nat. Preacher for Ang.*