

interview he had, in some horrific pause from his drudgery, passed through one of his terrible brain storms. He described it "as a vague and yet intense horror, with a conviction of being abroad in the night-wind, and dragged through places as if by some invisible power. I felt," he said, "last night as if I had been ridden by a witch for fifty miles, and I rose far more wearied in mind and body than when I lay down." His professional visitors tell us they "came to the conclusion that he was suffering from an overworked mind," and they gave him some very proper advice. "To all our commands," they say, "he readily promised obedience. For fully an hour we talked together on various subjects, and we left him with no apprehension of impending evil, little doubting but that a short time of rest and regimen would restore him to his wonted vigour." Such was their knowledge of insanity. The Hugh Miller that conversed with them so pleasantly and promisingly was not the same personality as that one who, before next morning, shot himself through the lungs. The brain of the former was in the calm that lures before the hurricane; that of the latter was torn and rent by the resistless fury of the electric brain storm. I have myself witnessed a few—too many, indeed—of these deceitful brain calms, and I learned never to trust in them. I remember once, in a summer evening, sitting for half an hour by the bedside of a very intelligent minister of religion, who laboured under the delusion that he had committed the unpardonable sin. He listened to all I said with calm docility, and gave assent to all I urged. To any one unfamiliar with this form of insanity, the impression left by that interview would have been that he entertained no purpose of suicide, or if he previously had, he now had totally relinquished it; and yet that man hanged himself next morning in a noose made of his own white cravat, which we afterwards discovered he had carried in his pocket for some weeks. When found he was kneeling, for on his feet he could not have succeeded in strangling himself.*

It was not many hours after Hugh Miller's friends parted with him in apparent mental cheerfulness and calm, that he penned to his invalid beloved wife the following lines:—

"DEAREST LYDIA,—My brain burns; I *must* have walked; and a fearful dream rises upon me. I cannot bear the horrible thought. God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy upon me. Dearest Lydia, dear children, farewell. My brain burns as the recollection grows. My dear, dear wife, farewell. "HUGH MILLER." †

* Whenever religious insanity lights on the delusion of the sin against the Holy Ghost, or the conviction of unpardonableness, it is as surely suicidal as that fire will burn or water drown.

† This letter, I think, shows that H. M. was free from the delusion of the unpardonable sin. He must, indeed, have been a strong believer in the mercy of God.