

but the sheen of his fatal spear—the lightning of his quivering dart which he brandishes insultingly over us. He makes us die a thousand deaths; he threatens oft before he strikes; he robs and tortures ere he kills. Whilst yet he seems to hesitate whether he shall smite us fatally and at once, and so end together all our apprehensions and distress—his stroke descends and rifles us of relatives whose lives are bound up in ours—of friends whose existence is dearer to us than our own. Oh! how oft since his first victim sunk before him hath he entered the happy unsuspecting circle, and by one fell stroke hath dashed all their joys. Oh! how many, and especially of late, hath this inexorable foe left with stript heart and scathed feelings, to bewail the sad havoc of his frequent strokes! How many have to exclaim in the impassioned language of the sublime poet—

“Insatiate Archer! Could not one suffice?”

Thy shafts flew thrice! and thrice my peace was slain!”

Or in the pathetic strains of the yet sublimer Psalmist, “*Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness.*”

This widowhood of the affections—this desolation of the heart—this wilderness of grief which the death of those we love creates, is rendered still more distressing by the fearful doubts which overhang their invisible state, and the equally impenetrable incertitude of our own. Do they yet live? Shall we live with them? Shall we together be all happy or miserable hereafter? Or shall we be solitary in our woe—divided in our bliss? Alas! it is the torrent of thoughts like these rushing on the already agitated soul which breaks it loose from its foundations, and makes it long for the firm rest of certainty—which causes it to prefer to its present doubt and fear, the awful risk of discovering whatever death may unfold—of enduring whatever the pregnant womb of eternity may bring forth. “*I loathe it,*” said one; “*I would not live away.*” “*It is better for me to die than to live.*” “*O that I might have my request, and that God would grant me the thing that I long for! Even that it would please God to destroy me, that he would let loose his hand and cut me off! Then should I yet have comfort? Yea I would harden myself in sorrow.*”

These, these are the moments and the moods of soul in which consolation is required, a consolation far stronger and richer than any thing of earthly origin, than any temporal or worldly source can afford. And this consolation is alike necessary to him who departs and