

UNCHANGING FRIEND.

"I know thy works and tribulation."—Rev. ii. 9.

"Be not weary in well-doing."—2 Thess. iii. 13.

Lord, I will calmly labour on
For Thy loved cause, and Thy loved
name;

Though every joy on earth were flown,
Thou art my God—still, still the same.

And while Thy smile doth on me rest,
The heaviest burden I can bear;
While cradled on Thy loving breast,
I triumph over every care.

When crush'd by grief—Thy precious love
Did then my wounded spirit heal;
As earth grew dim—Thou from above
Didst brighter still Thyself reveal.

My weary thoughts from it the while,
Thy pitying mercy did set free;
When friends forsook—Thy tender smile
Was beaming full of love on me!

Then, Lord, for Thee I'll labour still,
However rugged be my road;
My joy on earth, to do Thy will.
And all my strength in Thee my God.

Oh! Thou unchanging, faithful Friend,
May I to Thee still cling the more;
And on Thine arm of love depend,
Till life's calamities are o'er.

Yes—I would live and labour still
For Thee, my pitying, gracious Lord;
And bear, and do, Thy holy will,
Upheld by Thine Almighty Word.

Then with the will, Lord, give me power
To work, and wait, and watch for Thee;
In patient longing for that hour
When Thou wilt come, to set me free!

A PARADOX

"That is softness to feel hardness."

RUTHERFORD.

Dear, excellent Rutherford! What heights of Christian joy, what depths of Christian feeling, are unfolded in his matchless Letters! He seems to take us on the wings of his own fervor, and lift us up out of our coldness, and lukewarmness, and stupidity, nearer to the heights on which he dwelt. Much of his life seems indeed to have been spent on the Delectable Mountains—yea, in very sight of the Celestial City.

When we look within, and compare our experience with his, how far we seem apart! How dead and cold our spiritual life, if, indeed, we can hope that we have any spiritual

life. But is Christianity altered any since the days of Rutherford? Are not its hopes, its fears, its joys, its sorrows, the same as then? Are we not privileged to drink as deep draughts of faith and joy in the Redeemer as he did, if we will? Are we not living below our privileges, to "live at this poor, dying rate?"

When mourning our coldness and hardness of heart—when feeling the emptiness of earthly enjoyments—when rejoicing in the Christian's hope—or when striving to look upward with an eye of faith during heavy trial—there is in Rutherford's experiences, as portrayed in these letters, that which meets them all. There we find, as it were, the inner experiences of a true Christian opened for our help and encouragement.

Are we mourning our hardness of heart—our inability to mount on the wings of devotion with warmth and urgency of desire? Do we seem so cold and dead, that we are ready to write "bitter things" against ourselves, and conclude that we know nothing of the Christian's life? In one of these letters, written in answer to a friend who was in this state of darkness and doubt as to his Christian hope, he says: "Hold on in feeling and bewailing your hardness; for that is softness to feel hardness." And again, "Oh," say ye, "I cannot pray." Answer: "Honest sighing is faith breathing and whispering Him in the ear: the life is not out of faith, when there is sighing, looking up with the eyes, and breathing toward God: (Lam. iii, 56). "Hide not thine ear at my breathing." Oh, comforting assurance—"that is softness to feel hardness."

Fellow-Christian, dost thou bemoan thy hardness of heart? Does it seem impossible to raise one warm desire to heaven? Do thy sins raise a wall around thee, above which it seems hopeless for thy weak faith to attempt to mount? Art almost in despair concerning thyself? Remember "it is softness to feel hardness." Once it was not so with thee. Once thy lack of faith troubled thee little. Thou wast blind, and knew it not; poor, but felt it not; ignorant, but cared not for light; sinful, but was not troubled at the thought, neither sought the Fountain of Healing. The last thing thou wouldst have thought of doing, would have been to mourn over thy hardness of heart. Now, thy hardness of heart is thy chief trouble. Art thou not different from what thou once wast? Remember, it betokeneth softness of heart to feel and bewail thy hardness of heart. How knewest thou that thou hadst a hard heart? Truly, only through God's grace teaching thee. And remember, too, that "the life is not out of faith, when there is sighing, looking up with the eyes, and breathing toward God."—*Independent*.