

ously or piously like Christ ; for he does not say, you will observe, that my *death* may be conformed to His, but that *I* myself may be conformed thereto, that, not hereafter in my closing hours, but now and always I, Paul, may be assimilated to His dying, or rather be assimilating, since it is of a process, a continually progressive process, that he speaks ; the whole passage reading, " that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, while I am being made conformable to His death." This was his earnest longing, that he the man might be acquiring daily more and more resemblance to the Christ in His death. " See Him dying," he says, " look at the grace and sweetness of it ; that is what I want to be daily attaining to."

But now it might be said, when he aspires thus, as he appears to do, to become, not at some juncture, but habitually what his Lord was once in His final moments, does he not seem to be setting himself to achieve more than the Master achieved, and to be aiming at a higher degree of perfection? He would fain be as good and grand from morning unto eventide through all his years, as Christ was seen to be at a single point in His history. in Gethsemane and on the Cross. But it is one thing to be brave and brilliant for a little while in dying, and quite another thing to be a hero all your life long—that is transcendently the greater and more difficult of the two. Men have often acted or endured sublimely on special occasions, in temporary, trying surroundings, who have failed sadly at ordinary times, whose spirit and temper then has been far inferior. Nobly as they have behaved now and again under the pressure and excitement of passing solemn circumstances, there has been much in their behaviour amidst the petty circumstances of common days that was anything but noble. To be continually as we are at intervals would be to be perfect indeed ; but that we cannot manage.

Some people are more charming and beautiful in dying than they ever were in living. Have you not witnessed the meek patience, the devout resignation, the gentleness, the reverence, the love to which they have been chastened and refined, after protracted illness, and just before the end arrived? If they could but have lived so!

Many a man in former generations has borne himself divinely at the martyr's stake, who was often considerably less than divine at the family hearth. For a few hours he was superb, as they threatened and tortured him, as he stood before his ruthless judges, and went from them through the crowd to his fiery doom ; but he had not been always thus. Ah ! how frequently had he been testy and irritable in little things, low-thoughted and worldly-minded in the customary routine, doubting and desponding in quiet paths,—he who was now so patient, and spiritual, so dauntless and believing. Many that are first shall be last, and the last first. There are those who seem to us the greatest, because we have seen them great at grave and critical periods ; but there are those who, although they have never been seen shining magnificently in a transient, terrible darkness, are yet greater than they, because they have borne and acted amid the commonplace with constant greatness of spirit from year to year. That is the difficult, that the supreme thing to do.

When, then, fixing upon the *death* of Christ, the apostle cries, " Let me learn to *live* like that," is it not as if he were reaching after something loftier than his Lord? But his Lord—was He greater at the close than He had been from the beginning? Did He mount up in the last dread scene to an altitude above His usual self? No ! however it may be with us, He was never inferior or less, at ordinary times, than He was found to be at extraordinary. There were no fluctuations or vicissitudes of quality in Him no alternations of majesty and meanness