



*Marion and her companions.*

Reader, this is no fiction ; it is a reality ; the writer looked upon the corpse of the young sceptic and saw unmistakable marks of the last terrible despair. Do not delay the consideration of serious things until to-morrow. To-morrow may be too late—too late to seek repentance for sin, too late to exercise faith in Christ, too late to implore the washing of regeneration by the Holy Spirit, too late to make preparation for the solemnities of eternity !

Remember those solemn words, “ Because I have called, and ye refused ; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded, but ye have set at nought all My counsel, and would none of My reproof : I also will laugh at your calamity ; I will mock when your fear cometh ; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind ; when dis-

tress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer ; they shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me : for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord : they would none of My counsel : they despised all My reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.”

“ But whoso hearkeneth unto Me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.”

Let this incident not pass without giving to parents a solemn warning as to the responsibility resting upon them in regard to the education of their children. It is very desirable to obtain every advantage which schools can afford, but what is all knowledge, and what are all “ accomplishments ” compared with the health and welfare of the soul ? Yet we constantly see parents sending their children to places where there is no security that their moral training will be regarded. Hence many young people return from “ finishing ” schools with the evil seeds sown, sometimes of popery and sometimes of infidelity, which will presently bring forth deadly fruit. Care as to moral character and training is infinitely more important than mere outward appearance or accomplishments. Happily there are ways by which both advantages may be combined.

One word more about poor Marion. Let us hope that the terrible scene of her death-bed may possibly have been the expression of a rightly awakened conscience even at the latest hour of life. She had the knowledge of the way of salvation, and who can tell but that the prayers of her pious father may have been heard by the God of infinite grace ? It is a poor “ perhaps ” after all ; yet the case would have been more hopeless still had she died, as so many do, with out one anxious thought, one earnest cry for mercy.

Many, alas ! die in quietness and peace, and those around know not that it may be the peace of false security and the quietness of spiritual death.

not that consumption preyed gradually on her wasted frame.

At length the physician in soft whispers prepared the weeping parents for the inevitable separation. They summoned with deep anxiety their own faithful minister to the couch, where lay the fading form of their only cherished flower. She replied not to his earnest inquiries. She refused both counsel and consolation, and regarded his ministrations only as intrusive. He knelt down to implore Divine mercy, and the salvation of her soul. The invalid stretched out her feeble attenuated hand, shook the chair near her bedside, and feigned the need of her cough mixture, in order to turn a deafened ear to his petitions.

The last moments came to decide the conflict. Death delayed not to strike at his defying victim. She felt the cold chill of his icy hand seize her extremities, and gradually but surely creep through the whole frame. The secrets of the invisible world were unfolded to her mental vision ; forms of terror seemed to surround her. All was dark despair—the fearful plunge into an unknown abyss. The distracted mother and another relative fled from the chamber and stopped their ears with pillows from the terrific cries of an awakened conscience. The agitated father alone quitted not the post of duty. He pointed his child once more to the cross of Christ for remission of sins, and reminded her of the penitent thief saved at the last hour.

“ Ah ! ” she exclaimed, “ he had not pious parents as I have had. No, no ; the Bible is all true ; but 'tis too late to believe—too late ! ”

Too late was the last dying sound that fell on the ear of the heart-stricken father. He never ceased to mourn his blasted floweret. The blast had struck at the root of the family tree. In one year his mortal remains were deposited in the same grave, but in sure and certain hope of a joyful resurrection unto eternal life, through faith in that precious blood of that only Saviour his poor child had so wilfully rejected.