

For the Colonial Churchman.

TRUTH TO THE DYING.

Messrs. Editors,

The following remarks from the Church of England Magazine, on the above subject, so plainly point out the unkindness and sin of withholding from the sick and dying a knowledge of their danger, that I forward them for insertion in the columns of your useful paper, with the earnest hope and prayer, that those who may have friends dear to them as their own soul, stretched on a dying bed, may reveal to such the solemn truth, and prevail on them to improve the few waning moments of the eleventh hour, and induce them while yet they have time, to seek an interest in Jesus Christ, the conqueror of death, "in whom whosoever liveth and believeth shall never die."

INDAGATOR.

There are few situations more plainly trying than that in which we behold a fellow-creature stretched on a dying bed, who is yet wholly unconscious of his state, and flatters himself that he shall speedily be restored to the occupations and enjoyments of life. No real Christian can doubt that it is an imperative duty to undeceive such a person; and yet there is often a great backwardness in revealing the solemn truth; and the language of a delusive hope is frequently employed even by those who are convinced that the sufferer's case is hopeless.

This unwillingness to communicate a knowledge of their situation to the dying, may arise either from the pain it gives the individual who is made the channel of communication, or from the effect which is likely to be produced on the patient. Nothing but the most unpardonable selfishness will ever tolerate the former as a rational plea for the neglect of this duty. It may, and in the majority of cases it will, be most painful to be the bearer of the melancholy truth; but surely this ought not to prevent the truth being spoken. It is painful to rebuke vice; to warn the impenitent; to break in upon the slumber of those who are asleep in sin; boldly to set forth the guilt and danger of a life of disobedience: but still this must be done, and not merely by the appointed minister, whose office it is to exhort and to warn, but by every real servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, who seeks the furtherance of his divine Master's glory, and the salvation of the souls of his fellow-creatures. And if it be wisdom to tell a man of his danger while in the days of health and strength, it is worse than folly to conceal his true situation from the man who must soon lie down in the chambers of the grave.

With respect to the patient himself. If, indeed, there is a satisfactory evidence that, united to Christ by a true and living faith, he is in truth a believer, surely the tidings need not be held back, that he must soon leave the house of this earthly tabernacle. The believer's conversation is in heaven. His Lord is in heaven. His thoughts, his desires, his affections, are centred in heaven. He doubts not but that many who were linked to him by dear and tender ties shall dwell with him in heaven; why, then, should the truth be concealed that the world and all its vanities is fast departing from him, and that he shall speedily be emancipated from the trammels of a corruptible body, and that his soul, ransomed by the blood of Jesus, shall wing its way to those regions where there is fulness of joy? Death is gain to the believer. The worldling knows not this. He cannot comprehend the purport of the declaration. What gain can there be in death? is his inquiry. But "all things" are the believer's—even "death," with all its fancied horrors. For what says the Saviour? "He that liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Let this declaration be laid up in the heart as a treasure of inestimable value. There is no death to the believer. The body shall, indeed, be consigned to the sepulchre, and the name and memorial shall soon be forgotten, and the ashes shall no longer be distinguished from the soil to which they have been consigned. But there is life eternal for the believer, in the house not made with hands. Why, then, not tell the dying Christian that he must soon leave a world which he knew was not his home? Why not tell him that the weary journey is fast

drawing to a close—that the day is now far spent—and that he shall speedily enter on an eternal day of unclouded brightness? He may have some worldly affairs to arrange; he may have some dying testimony to give; he may have some injunction to impart. It is but kindness, then, to tell him of his real situation.

But, if it be needful to inform the dying Christian that the day of life is far spent, more needful is it to deal honestly by the man who is either wholly careless about the momentous concerns of eternity, or who is building his hopes of eternal happiness on sandy foundation, and not on the Rock of Ages. In either of these cases, it is not only inexpedient, it is positively sinful, to keep the patient in the dark. The few warning moments of the eleventh hour should surely be improved. The attempt should be made under the Holy Spirit's blessing, to illumine the eyes of the understanding, ere the bodily eyes close in the sleep of death, and to impress the hard and stony heart, ere that heart ceases to beat in the chambers of silence. If there be neither knowledge, nor wisdom, nor device in the grave; if, as the tree has fallen, so must it lie for ever; if he that is unjust must be unjust still, and he that is filthy must be filthy still; surely his crime cannot but be heinous, who deludes the dying sinner or the dying formalist, and does not lead them, while the lamp of life holds on to burn, to Jesus, the only shelter from the wrath to come. Surely, the concerns of a never-dying soul are not thus to be tampered with. Surely, the eternal portion of a human being is not to be trifled with. Surely, the vague, undefined notions of the Divine mercy, to which countless myriads trust, ought not to put aside the declarations of the Divine Word, which represent the fearful portion of those who shall appear before the heavenly throne unjustified, unsanctified, and not meet for the society of "just men made perfect."

But what efficacy, it may be asked, can there be in a death-bed repentance? Too many, it may be said, trust to such repentance, and trust in vain.—Why disturb the dying sinner, when the life is now drawing to a close? Salvation is the work of a whole life, and it is too late to begin that work now.—Such a mode of reasoning testifies a lamentable ignorance of the salvation of the Gospel. It is dangerous to trust to a death-bed repentance; it is presumptuous to do so. That bed is too often a bed of bodily anguish, when the thoughts cannot be directed to spiritual and eternal subjects. "To-day, while it is called to-day," man is to flee to the Saviour, to seek pardon through his atoning blood. But surely no man will dare to say that God may not show mercy even at the last. No man will dare to say that the voice of sovereign mercy may not utter to the soul of the dying, "Thy sins are forgiven thee; depart in peace." No man may presume to limit the sovereign grace of that Jehovah who delighteth in mercy. Whatever God's purposes may be, man's duty is plain. Whether or no God will grant repentance unto life, man's duty is to call the dying sinner to repentance. Whether or no God will dispel the mists of prejudice and error, man's duty is to point out a perishing brother the true character of the Gospel dispensation. We may depend upon it, that he will be regarded by the condemned soul in misery as the worst of enemies, who drew the veil of concealment over the actual condition in life's last moments, and whispered the delusive tale of restoration to bodily health, while the soul was on the very confines of eternal misery.

There is a reason urged, however, for the propriety of concealing the true nature of their situation from the dying, lest the chance of their recovery might be lessened by the shock which the communication would impart. Even were the communication like to prove hurtful so far as the body is concerned, it still would seem an imperative duty to acquaint the patient with his true condition; and the conduct of the medical attendant is in the highest degree reprehensible, who keeps the patient and his friends in the dark. Speaking with reference to this very point, a medical practitioner of great eminence, who has viewed this important subject in its true light, thus records his opinion: "It is objected, that the communication may be attended with injurious effects, both to the body and to the mind; but those des-

qualified to judge must say, from experience, that a prudent intimation of the truth, so far from proving prejudicial, in almost every instance is productive of a calmer state, and never does harm."

Even taking a lower ground on which to rest this imperative duty, that of doing to others as we would they should do unto us, surely no man in his senses would desire to pass into eternity without a knowledge of his situation. No one, not laboring under mental infirmity, would prefer knowing nothing about the change which is so speedily to take place. Why, then, act to others in a way different to that in which we wish they would act to us? Why regard that as a kindness to others, which we should regard as the greatest act of unkindness to ourselves? Why not seek to soothe the bed of death with the only message that can then bring true peace, the message, that Christ Jesus waiteth to be gracious; and that whosoever cometh unto him, he will in no wise "cast out?"

At all events, the duty of the Christian minister is obvious. He must expostulate with the friends of the dying on the guilt of concealment. He must, without fear of offence, speak boldly, as he ought to speak, if he would escape the guilt and consequent condemnation of the unfaithful watchman and negligent shepherd. The exercise of the various Christian graces is never more important, than in the solemnity of the dying chamber. It is there that the presence of the pastor of deep Christian experience is especially felt, and that many a pastor, whose name has not extended beyond the limited sphere of his parochial duty, is made the humble instrument of directing a perishing soul to the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, a soul which shall be crowned of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus.

THE SELECTOR.—NO. II.

THE MEASURE OF SIN.

No commandment is trifling which has God for its author; no prohibition is to be despised which has set forth; and no sin is pardonable here which he hath not pardoned. It argues a gross ignorance of human nature, and of the first principles of morality to suppose that the subject-matter of our crimes may be prominent, or conspicuous, in order to constitute us criminals. The outward circumstances of our various stations in life may, probably, place us beyond the reach of many of those temptations which lead to public and notorious mischief; but still the thoughts of the heart may be evil continually, and shall they condemn us?—The customs of society, or regard to our own reputation, may preserve us from the commission of glaring outrages, when better principles are wanting; but are we, therefore, to thank God that we "are not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as the despised of the world?" Can such sentiments or language pass us in the sight of Him with whom we have to do? Most assuredly not. It is the inward principle that actuates the heart, and not the overt act resulting from it, which makes us sinners in the sight of God. The smallest straw gliding upon the surface of a stream, will point out the quarter towards which the current flows, as clearly as the largest and heaviest bodies which are borne along by it; and our actions apparently most trifling in themselves, sufficiently demonstrate the bent of our feelings, whether they are right towards God.—Rev. J. S. M. Anderson.

HINTS TO FEMALES.

Each female should anxiously seek that her conduct should be regulated by the standard of the Gospel. If she hath not a lively piety herself, she ought most diligently to seek, she is bound to care for it in all others, and to take great care that her whole conduct does not offend the rules of such a religion. She is bound to let all who approach her understand that she venerates religion, and that she feels injured by any reflection upon its usages, she will not suffer the accents of profanity to be in her hearing, without being offended. It would hold it an enormity to indulge herself in irreverent or profane expressions, so she must exercise great care and attention, that she do not give horror on hearing them from others.