

Amid the rapids of time, there are few objects a man observes with less care and distinctness than himself. To one standing on the shore, the current appears to pass by with inconceivable swiftness, but to one who is himself gliding down the stream, the face of this vast extent of waters is unruffled, and all around him is a dead calm. It is only by looking towards the shore, by discerning here and there a distant landmark, by casting his eye back upon the scenery that is retiring from his view, that he sees he is going forward. And how fast! The tall pine that stands alone on the mountain's brow, casts its shade far down the valley; while the huge promontory throws its shadow almost immeasurably on the plain below. It is but a few years, and I was greeting life's opening day. But yesterday, I thought myself approaching its meridian. To-day I look for those meridian splendors, and they are either wholly vanished, or just descending behind the evening cloud. I cannot expect to weather out the storms of this tempestuous clime much longer. A few more billows on these dangerous seas, perhaps a few days of fair weather, is the most I can look for, before I am either shipwrecked, or reach my desired haven.

Why fly these years so rapidly? It is in anticipation rather than retrospect, that men put too high an estimate upon earthly things. I have been wandering to-day in the grave-yard. I have trodden softly on the place of my fathers' sepulchres. I have been playing with the willow and the cypress that weep over their dust. The generations of men dwell here. Yes, here they are. Those whom I have loved, and still love, and hope to love, are here. *The fashion of this world passeth away.* The fair fabric of earthly good is built upon the sand. It rocks and falls under the first stroke of the tempest. *Man, at his best estate is altogether vanity.* It is well that it is so. Were it otherwise, we should put far off the evil day, and live as if we flattered ourselves with immortality on the earth. When the Duke of Venice shewed Charles the Fifth the treasury of St. Mark, and the glory of his princely palace, instead of admiring them, he remarked, "These are the things that make men so loath to die."

On what rapid wings has this last year sped its course! How sure and certain an approximation to the close of this earthly existence! Every year adds to what is past and leaves less to come. *What is your life? It is even as a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.* What is it, when compared with the amount of labour to be accomplished, and the magnitude of the interests at stake? What is it, compared with the facility with which it may be interrupted, and the ten thousand causes of decay and dissolution it is destined to encounter? What is it, when compared with the ever enduring existence to which it is an introduction? How fugitive! how frail! Hardly has the weary traveller

laid himself down to rest, when he is summoned away to pursue his journey, or called to his ever lasting home. *We spend our years as a tale that is told.* The flying cloud, the evanescent vapour, the arrow just propelled from the string, the withering grass, the flower whose beauty scarcely blooms ere it is faded, and whose fragrance is scarcely perceptible ere it is gone, are apt similitudes of the life of man.

I am but a wanderer, a pilgrim, a sojourner on the earth. Though every thing is cheerful about me, I feel to-day exiled and alone. A thousand recollections crowd upon my mind to remind me of the past, to premonish me of the future, and to lead me to some just conceptions of the present. This world is not my home. I have made it my resting place too long. I hear a voice to-day, in accents sweet as angels use, whispering to my lonely heart, *Arise, and depart hence, for this is not your rest!* I am away from my Father's house. I have felt vexations and trials. I have experienced disappointments and losses. I have known the alienation of earthly friends. I am not a stranger to dejected hopes. I know something of conflicts within. But now and then I have a glimpse of the distant and promised inheritance, which more than compensates me for all. It is no grief of heart to me that I have no enduring portion beneath the sun. I am but a passing traveller here. I would fain feel like one who is passing from place to place, and going from object to object, with his eye fixed on some long-wished for abode beyond, while every successive scene brings me nearer to the end of my course, and all these earthly vicissitudes endear to me the hopes of that final rest. To live here, however happily, however usefully, however well, must not be my ultimate object. I was born for eternity. Nay, I am the tenant of eternity even now. Time belongs to eternity. It is a sort of *isthmus*, or rather a little *gulph*, with given demarcations, set off and bounded by lines of ignorance; but it mingles with the boundless flood—it belongs to eternity still. A great change indeed awaits us. We must drop this tabernacle and go into a world of spirits. But we shall be in the same duration. I must live for eternity.

In entering on another year, I know not from what unexpected quarter, or at what an unguarded hour, difficulties and dangers may come. O that I could enjoy more of the favour of God, more of the presence of the Saviour, more of the sealing of the ever blessed Spirit! O for more of a calm, approving conscience, and more of the delightful influence of the peace-speaking blood of Jesus Christ! From some cause or other, I begin this year with a trembling heart. I fear I may lose my way. I am afraid lest I should turn aside from the straight path; lest I may repose in the bower of indolence and ease; lest I may sleep on enchanted ground; lest I should be ensnared, if not destroyed by an unhallowed curiosi-