

The Honourable Robert Boyle, who was the seventh son of the Earl of Cork, was born at Lismore in Ireland, in the same year that Lord Bacon died. He lived in the times of several noted men, such as Galileo, Sir Isaac Newton, Evelyn, Sir Christopher Wren, Archbishop Usher, and Dr. Sanderson, with whom he was on terms of friendship.

He acquaints us with several misfortunes which befell him in early life. When he was three years old he lost his mother. When he was a little boy he acquired the habit of stammering, by mimicking some children of his own age. On a certain occasion he was taking a journey, and, in passing a brook which had been swollen by recent showers, the coach was overturned, and carried down the stream, and he was in imminent danger of losing his life. When he was at Eton he very narrowly escaped being crushed to pieces, or suffocated, by the sudden fall of the room in which he lodged. Twice he was thrown from his horse, and once he was in great peril from receiving wrong medicine. "In his rescue from these dangers, he acknowledged the hand of God, who, in these and other passages of his life, had graciously guided and protected him."

In 1638, his father sent him to travel abroad for some years, and he visited Paris and Geneva. At this latter place he applied himself to the study of mathematics and rhetoric, in which he much excelled. But an event of far greater consequence, and of more lasting interest, now happened to him. "One night the city of Geneva was visited by a most awful tempest, accompanied by terrific thunder and lightning. The wind howled frightfully, the rain fell in torrents, the electric flashes were frequent and dazzling, the thunder was such as he had never before heard. He started out of sleep, and thought that the end of the world had arrived, and that the Day of Judgment was at hand. His conscience told him that he was unprepared for that solemn tribunal; and feeling the wretchedness of being in such a condition, he resolved, that if a further respite were given to the world, and to himself, he would devote more attention to religion. The morning came, and he ratified his determination so solemnly, that from that day he dated his conversion, renewing, now that he was past the danger, the vow he had made whilst he believed that he was in it."

It is worthy of observation that, although his soul was thus consciously aroused by so terrific a display of God's power, he ever afterwards asserted that "*piety was to be embraced, not so much to gain heaven, as to serve God.*"

In an age when a thick mist of scepticism, as it were, was just rising to darken the moral vision of many hearts, good men were tempted, but not overcome; and so it was that Mr. Boyle, even after this circumstance, became the victim of strange and hideous thoughts; but it pleased God, after he had spent some months of bitter and distracting doubts, to restore the blessed light and comfort of heaven to his soul, when receiving at church the holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. He now became established in the faith of Christ, yet not so, he says, but that "the fleeting clouds of doubt and disbelief never ceased, now and then, to