

he would be her partner and protector, can be so base and inhuman as to violate his engagements. Illustrations like these need not be multiplied. We have all in certain circumstances experienced an apparent difference in the length of time, according as we have been well or ill, happy or miserable. As a fog seemingly magnifies the objects which are dimly visible to the naked eye, so clouds of sorrow and seasons of trial seem to arrest the rapid march of time. Disappointment which is a kind of mental sickness has the same effect. When in any department of manual toil or spiritual energy, a man labors for success and fails to reach it, finding all his pains and expense of no avail and all his prospects ruined, his difficulty now is not to find time sufficient for his work, but to find some kind of work to while away the time. So too with hope deferred, which, as one of the sacred writers touchingly says, "maketh the heart sick." So too with idleness, one of the worst diseases which infect the human species, for doing nothing is doing mischief.

But there are circumstances of another kind which have the same effect upon our conceptions of the shortness of time—circumstances of a purely moral and religious character. The philanthropist, interested in the enlightenment of mankind, in the reform of social abuses, in the advancement of the public good, thinks it long to wait before his views are accepted and acted upon. He complains of the tardiness with which the great principles of right, truth, and justice are respected, and of the reluctance shown by many, even of those who are most directly concerned, to espouse causes and take sides in popular agitations, about which, he thinks, there can be no doubt or dispute. The awakened sinner roused to a sense of the awful situation occupied by every man who is unreconciled to God, believing himself to be lost and undone unless by faith in Jesus Christ he lay hold of the hope set before him in the Gospel, and resolving by prayerful application to devote himself to the pursuit of the one thing needful, thinks it long to wait days or months ere his cry is attended to and the desires of his heart are satisfied. The man of God, whose sins have provoked his heavenly father to subject him to a temporary suspension of his privileges and to make him feel the salutary effect of paternal chastisement, cannot speak of the shortness of time, when he feels it is not with him now as in the days that are past, and when he is sighing and praying for the return of the Holy Spirit to uplift, direct, and comfort him. Even the advanced Christian, conscious of being at peace with God, and rejoicing in the intimacy and satisfaction of his spiritual fellowship, having no doubt whatever of his being accepted of the Lord, and of his having a sure and abiding interest in the inheritance of the saints in light, may be tempted at times to wish for his departure hence that he might be for ever present with

the Lord, which he knows is far better than to continue in the body, and, especially if temporal calamity or severe sickness befall him, may begin to say with himself, "I am weary of my life!" Oh that my father would take me home!

Now in regard to all these statements and illustrations, it is to be observed that they are referable to the general principle, that our notions of the qualities of things are necessarily very much affected by the circumstances in which we are placed, by the condition of our minds and bodies, by the aspect in which we regard them, the medium through which we view them, the position from which we contemplate them, the shade of light or darkness which surrounds them. But our notions do not in any way really change these qualities. The blind man cannot see the light, but the light is not therefore turned into darkness. The worldly and avaricious may suppose that their highest happiness consists in temporal prosperity, but their awful mistake does not interfere with the unalterable fact, that a religious life is the only happy life. And so we may from a variety of causes imagine that our time is long, whereas it is actually exceedingly brief. We may delude ourselves by thinking we have yet many years to spend upon earth, but we cannot thereby secure ourselves against the approach of death for a single moment, even should the grim tyrant be standing at our very doors. Whatever we may think or say, the words of the Apostle will be literally and completely verified in the individual experience of each one of us; "but this I say brethren, the time is short." It is well for us to look at this truth in all its importance and solemnity, and betimes to yield to the impressions which a fair and impartial consideration of it cannot fail to excite.

Need I refer to the numerous touching declarations of Scripture, which on this subject accord so closely and strikingly with the results of our observation and experience, that we are compelled at once to admit them to be true. "Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow and continueth not." "Lord make me to know mine end and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am. Behold thou hast made my days as an handbreadth and mine age is as nothing before thee; verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity." "Go to, now, ye that say, to-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain; whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." By these, and many other representations such as these, the word of God continually reminds us of the shortness as well as the uncertainty of human existence. And