

*Concluded from Page 656.*

Not on great empires and institutions alone can we mark the changes and ravages produced by time. It respects not victims. What alterations it effects in single communities, in congregations, in families, on individuals. Some we miss at the social party, in church, and at home, whom we shall never see till the grave gives up her dead. And they were not all old. They did not all pine away before our eyes in wasting disease. Some for that matter, might have been here yet. They have gone, and we'll go next, while time is whistling by unconscious and unheeding of the desolation it leaves behind.

Should not such thoughts affect our hearts, and lead us in loving desire, to seek a home in the city which hath foundations, which shall never be moved; whose inhabitants never grow old, never sicken, never experience suffering or change?

4. Discerning the time, is to notice its uncertainty, so as to form vivid impressions of that characteristic of our present life.

In itself, time is God's clockwork.—Nothing can be more regular, sure, unfaltering in its progress to its end. That mechanism has never stopped, never jarred, never will till it stops completely and forever.

But our stay in time is a most uncertain thing, depending on a thousand unforeseen contingencies; these again depending on the will of God, who giveth not account of His matters to any. We hear the ceaseless ticking of that clock, when our cares, or pleasures, or business engagements, or household duties permit us to listen.—

But we know not at what instant our ears may lose their hearing; our eyes their seeing; and we lie down and sleep the sleep that knows no waking here.

We may be actively devising well-planned schemes of advantage to ourselves, which we are destined never to accomplish. We

may be working hard for the benefit of, and hopefully foreseeing bright prospects for our children, which we, perhaps they also, shall never realize. We may be proposing to ourselves some sinful indulgence; or we may be resolving that we shall forsake sin, and yet be cut off before we have tasted the guilty pleasure or turned to God. We may be aiming high, and have our whole souls engrossed in some useful, scientific, or religious pursuit, which, when successful, is to crown our brow with laurels, or to make our memorial fragrant as benefactors to our kind and blessed of God, and all our imaginings may be dissipated and go for nothing in a moment. God who neither fears our frown, nor is dependent on our good-will, nor necessitated to require our help, may say abruptly, "Ye sons of men, return." And we must obey.

How true, this instant only is ours; and ours as a loan! To-morrow! "If the Lord will."

If such be the case, should an account that runs into eternity be left unsettled? At this season, merchants and tradesmen generally make up their books, and present their accounts. Dilatory and delinquent debtors, are warned by threatening advertisements in the newspapers; and honest men endeavour to settle and pay what they owe. But our account with God—the only one that will turn up in eternity, men generally, many men who would resent the allegation of dishonesty, are unprepared to meet—do not try to settle!

Do not let it be said either that it is only in thoughtlessness that men so much neglect their standing with God; that they are not thinking of being called soon into His presence. That is true! But even that wretched excuse, were it as solid, as it is worthless, would not cover with its seeming the extent of this sinful negligence. For what is the fact. Men, with the *thought of death upon their souls*, and in *actual anticipation of it*, will settle the claims which fellow-men have upon them,—and make their wills—and sometimes exhibit in that act unjust partialities—sinful bias in favor of the earthly—stone blindness to the fact that they were stewards of God's bounties:—and sometimes will show unforgiving resentment—and sometimes avarice bound to them by their heartstrings;—and then