

IX. LAST DAYS AND DEATH

After his release from the charge of their souls, and when he had enjoyed a season of rest, his health improved a little, and during that summer he removed with his family to Nova Scotia. He was afterwards enabled to preach occasionally, and to deliver a few addresses on temperance. In this cause, as we have seen, he was early enlisted, and to his dying hour he willingly subserved its interests as a handmaid to, but not as a substitute for, religion. After the enterprise had obtained a powerful impulse both in the United States and in Great Britain, and after statistics had been collected extensively on the subject, he again advocated the cause in his native place in the form of an address, which was afterwards published. Whatever may be its merits as a production, it required but very little of that moral heroism which was demanded when he preached on the subject before the magistrates of Richibucto.

For the support of his family he opened a private Academy in Halifax. In this he was successful for two years, until overcome by disease. Having finally to abandon the hope of public usefulness, he removed his family to Pictou, where for several months he lingered under the fell consumption.— My last interview with him was in June, 1836. A spirit of submission characterised his deportment. He knew that it was good for him that he had been afflicted, and while he did not fully understand why God should keep him so long on the earth while his usefulness was gone, and he was "become as a wonder unto many," still, in patience, "he possessed his soul," and "endured as seeing him who is invisible."* From the pen of his friend Patterson I have the following observations illustrative of his character, and affording some knowledge of his views of "the work of the ministry" as surveyed from a death-bed:—

"Mr McLean you know was a hard student. His sermons were the result of much reading and thought. He would not serve God with what cost him nothing. He was willing to spend and be spent in the service of his Master. He did not lose in your estimation by increased acquaintance. There are many persons whose piety appears very warm in public, but, did you know them in private, your good opinion of them would be diminished. It was not so with our friend. The more intimately you became acquainted with him the more highly you would esteem him. His conscientious attention to private duties disclosed the secret of his public usefulness. During the short time that he was spared to minister in holy things the anticipations of his friends were not disappointed. His preaching was of a highly useful and practical kind. But his career was short. His Master, in his mysterious Providence, saw fit soon to call him away from his labours here below. I saw him not long before his lamented death. Deep indeed was the sense which he then felt of the responsibilities of the ministerial office. Earnestly did he endeavour to impress it upon my mind. Oh! that we could always feel it, as in the prospect of eternity."

* "During the last visit which I was privileged to make to him," says the Rev J. Waddell, "after expatiating upon the goodness of God both in matters temporal and spiritual, and giving expression to grateful acknowledgments of his mercies, he wondered what good purpose in divine Providence could be served by his protracted existence, in circumstances in which he feared he was himself reaping little profit, and in which he supposed he could be of no service to others; and then catching himself, he said, 'Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God ye might receive the promise.'"