

# THE MONTHLY RECORD

OF THE

## CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

IN NOVA SCOTIA AND THE ADJOINING PROVINCES.

VOL. XII.

FEBRUARY, 1866.

No. 2.

“If I forget thee, O Jerusalem! let my right hand forget its cunning.”—Ps. 137, v. 5.

### SERMON,

*Preached on Sabbath the 31st December, 1865,  
at Wallace, by the Rev. James Anderson,  
missionary.*

“What is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.”—JAMES IV. 14.

If we were asked to specify the one truth of world-wide interest which is taught us with most variety of metaphor and illustration in the providence of God, we would hardly hesitate to point to the *shortness and uncertainty of our present state of existence*. Ah! yes, it is just as one might expect: there is nothing so ripe in this sin-blighted world as the reflected images of Death—the munitions of change and decay. At every turn of life's pathway, the traveller's eye rests on the finger-post, on which is inscribed: “To the City of the Dead.” To show the transitoriness of human life, we need not bid you to remember the well-known persons that, a few years, or even a year ago, sat in these pews as your fellow worshippers. We need not point you to any of the many homes into which Death is ever and anon carrying weeping and wailing and widowhood. This solemn truth is taught in the world of living men—in the diseases of infancy and youth—in the furrowed brow, the hoary hairs, and shortened step of age. Yea, it is even taught by things that live not. The shortening days and lengthening nights—the withering leaves and drooping flowers—the changing seasons and passing years;—are not these symbols of decay ever whispering to our souls:

“What is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.”

Now, there occurs special seasons, in the life of each of us, when the truth of these words come home to us with great force and marked vividness. When, for instance, we sit in the solemn stillness of the death chamber, and gaze, in speechless sorrow, on the shroud that covers the “pride of our heart and the hope of our life”; or when we bend over the closing grave of a friend or coeval; or when we stand, as we do this day, on the very limits of another year;—we cannot but be reminded of the *shortness of our present life, and the uncertain tenure by which we hold anything in this world*. May God grant, then, that this truth shall awaken in each of us suitable and serious reflections!

In our further remarks, we shall dwell shortly, in the first place, on the important truth set forth in our text; and, secondly, the practical lesson it teaches us.

I. The important truth set forth in the words, “What is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.”

The shortness and uncertainty of human life is a doctrine which is taught on almost every page of Holy Writ. And the sacred penmen would almost seem to contend for metaphors and illustrations that would show it most fully and clearly. One describes it as “a tale that is told”; another, as “a flower of the field”; another, as “a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.” Nor is it only by poetical imagery that they seek to impress it on man's