

invest his thoughts with an unction and a power that might bring peace to his soul.

The threatening symptoms soon began to pass away, his strength rallied, and within the space of a few weeks he was able to leave his sick chamber and appear with the family in the parlour, and in occasional drives into the country. His recovery was hailed by his mother, and spoken of by himself, as partaking somewhat of the marvellous nature of a resurrection. He again went out into active life, and now I began to fear the result. I was very attentive to him during the progress of his recovery, watching with great anxiety his mental tendencies and their development; and while I saw much to sustain hope, yet a certain inexplicable mannerism, associated with casual outbreaks of a spirit yet unhumiliated to a level with his real moral condition, made me, when disposed to rejoice, to do it with trembling. The family, either as a compliment to my polite attention to the son, or as the effect of my conversation and prayers when with them, took a large pew in the chapel, and attended my ministry for some months very regularly, and with apparent seriousness. Mr. Charles—usually headed the family in walking up the aisle; and, after admitting all into the pew, he took his seat next to the door, and seemed by his looks and his attention as though he really loved the habitation of the Lord's house.

But, alas! their habits of external piety had not resumed the regularity of established order more than six months before I observed an occasional break. Sometimes the youngest sisters were absent, then his mother, then his brother, and then himself,—his eldest sister was uniformly regular and punctual. When I called to see them the hearty welcome was exchanged for the cold formality or artificial politeness; frivolous excuses were assigned for irregularity of attendance on public worship, and the re-appearance of the former signs of fashionable gaiety, and nightly revels, soon told the melancholy tale that the promising glory was departed.

As I sat one day in my study, musing over this touching and depressing event in the history of my ministerial life, with the scene of the first night's visit passing in review before my imagination, and going onwards in my anticipations to the awful decisions of the last day, trembling under the burden of my own thoughts and fears, my servant informed me that there was a gentleman below who wished to see me. On entering the parlour, I was surprised, yet gratified, on seeing Mr. Charles—, who most cordially offered me his hand; and then at my request he resumed his seat. He is come at last, I thought, to unburden his mind, and to record now, more decidedly than ever, his vow of perpetual fidelity to God his Saviour. Delusive expectation! it soon vanished away, as the beautiful dream of a midnight hour vanishes when the eye opens on the dawn of the morning light. A scene of moral baseness and consummate folly and impiety, now sprung up before me, which has never had a parallel in the whole course of my varied and extended history.

"I have called, sir," he said, "to tender you my sincere thanks for your polite attention to me during my illness; and am desired by my mother so say that our family does not wish to retain the pew at your chapel, though it is very possible you may occasionally see my eldest sister. As it relates to myself, sir, I have to inform you that I feel no trifling degree of mortification when recalling, what, in the season of intense suffering, and when the mind was somewhat wandering on the other side of sober reason, I said to you; and what I have been induced to allow you to say to me since my recovery. This communication, I have no doubt, will startle you; and with your sentiments and opinions, it will vex, and may depress you; but a regard to my honour compels me to make it. One request, sir; and then I have done. Look no longer on me as a deciple of your faith; repeat to no one, what in the sanctuary of

private friendship you saw and heard; hold all that as sacred as the secrets of the grave. From this moment I shall sail down the stream of time enjoying the pleasures of life while it lasts, and leave the future till the future comes."

I was literally thunderstruck. The elegant politeness of his manners; the cool effrontery with which he delivered these horrifying determinations; his very respectful looks and tones towards myself, tended in some measure to keep down my spirit—to soften it—to melt it—to bring it to play on some latent feelings which I thought might possibly still linger in his soul. The attempt failed; for on opening on him in a calm and affectionate tone and style, he abruptly said, "Pardon me, sir, I merely came, out of respect to your character and your politeness, to announce a changeless determination, not to submit to a remonstrance, nor to argue a question of divinity."

"Really, my dear sir, you do surprise me. However, as you will submit to no remonstrance, nor descend to any argumentation, you will allow me to say, in vindication of my own honor, that I did not obtrude myself on you or your family. I was sent for, and on a night, and at an hour of the night, when but few ministers would leave their homes and wait on an entire stranger as you then were to me. I employed no torturing process to work on your soul. I saw you writhing in mental agonies when you knew not that I stood by your side. It was no remark of mine which wrung from your burning lips, the heart-rending exclamation, 'I am going to take a leap in the dark,' which sent your own mother out of the room wild in delicious frenzy." He moved. "Stop, sir, I must finish, you are bound in honour to listen. You say you will now sail down the stream of time, and enjoy life, leaving the future till it comes. Take warning, or if not listen to an announcement. You may enjoy life, but remorse, and remorse keener than a scorpion's sting is the penalty which you may have to pay. The future is coming: it may be here sooner than you expect and then the threatened wreck of the soul may become a real one; the leap in the dark must be taken, and then you perish for ever. He bowed and abruptly left the room. I did not follow him. I did not like to let my eye look intently on him for the last time, nor touch his hand knowingly for the last time. It was to me the most awful interview I ever held with a human being. Such a combination of evil principles coming out in a set speech so coolly, such base ingratitude to the God of his mercies, such defiance of his authority, such scornful contempt of the great salvation, such bold daring of a readiness to meet what might be involved in the future! Alas! I had no power to bear up under such an accumulated treasuring up of wrath against the day of wrath. My spirits sank within me, and I sought a momentary diversion among the hilarity and playfulness of my much loved children.

Well, that day soon passed away, though not its remembrance; his eldest sister still attended the chapel, though she cautiously avoided all intercourse with myself or any of the people. At length the family removed to a distant neighbourhood, when she also disappeared, and all knowledge and trace of them were lost. Years rolled on; the terrors of that awful night, and the more appalling utterances of that eventful day, were now far back in the distant history of my life; my recollections of them were less frequent, as I had other scenes to witness, and other utterances to engage my attention; and when they did rise up before my imagination, their once vivid impressions lost much of their depressing and agonising power, except when out in a very dark and stormy night, then the past scene of horror, and the ominous exclamation, "I am going to take a leap in the dark," produced a convulsive agitation on my spirits.

After preaching on a Sabbath evening, from the word "Depart," one of my hearers, an intimate friend, followed me into the vestry, and said, "I

wish, sir, you would accompany me some evening in the early part of the week to see a person who is dangerously ill; if you will fix the day and the hour, I will call on you, and take you in my chase." We fixed Tuesday evening. He came, and we left together. He made no allusion to the dying person, except the probability of his not surviving many weeks, if days; nor did I ask any question, except to ascertain if the dying man was pious or not.

On our arrival at a beautiful villa in the suburbs, I was ushered into a drawing room, where to my astonishment, I saw the eldest sister of Mr. Charles—. She attempted to speak, but could not; and, in a few minutes she withdrew and I was left alone. My friend was not with me; he went to make a call on another family, a servant at length appeared, and requested me to follow her, which I did in mournful silence. I entered a bedroom, which was deserted by all, except the dying man and his nurse. This is strange. Is he an orphan in this world of sorrow? Has he no friend, except one hired for the occasion, a mere under-waiter in the ceremony of death? I had my fears, and they were gloomy for I felt as if I were treading near a fatal volcanic spot, marked off as sacred to some awful manifestations of divine justice. I looked on the dying man, whose pale and distended countenance told me that death was near at hand. I thought I knew him, yet was not quite certain. "He has been lying in this state," said the nurse, "nearly half-an-hour, but he will wake up soon." I took a chair and watched by his side. He moved, opened his eyes, look on me with a fixed look, yet remained silent. It is, I said to myself, Mr. Charles—, but how changed! Ah! the voyage of life is nearly ended, and now he will have, I fear, to shoot the gulph; and there he will perish. He must now very soon take the dreaded leap. He still looked, we were both silent; the power of speech was gone from us. He raised himself a little on his pillow, still keeping his eye fixed on me as though he dreaded me, and at length he spoke. "You, sir, saved me once when the stream was drifting me on the fatal rocks, and then I escaped the wreck. But what return have I made to him who sent you with the message of grace; to him who gave me space to repent, and motives and promises to do it; to him who waited to be gracious and was willing to forgive? I rebelled against him again. I sinned yet more daringly and desperately. He has again overtaken me, his heavy wrath has again fallen upon me, the pains of hell have got hold of me. I see the storm coming, and this time I shall go down. I must take the fatal leap now, and perish for ever." I knew not what reply to make, and when making an effort to speak he interrupted me by saying, "Your visit, sir, has taken me by surprise. I knew not that you were sent for; I should have prevented it if I had known it. One confession I will make, a sense of honour, not the hope of mercy, compels me to make it. Ever since the fatal day when I saw you last, and said what I did say, I have been abandoned by God, except when he has drifted a storm of vengeance over my mental pathway; and perhaps he has ordained that you who heard, and have doubtless recorded, my impiously profane determination to enjoy life while sailing down the stream of time, shall be present to witness the struggles of my doomed soul when in the act of perishing for ever."

A fit of delirium now came on, and in that state I left him. He was more calm on the following morning, and continued tranquil during the day, and several succeeding days; and hopes were entertained by his medical friend, and others, that he would again rally, and yet live to taste once more the sweet cup of life. But they were all doomed to disappointment. His fever returned with still greater violence; he became faint and felt dying, and just before the death-stroke was given, he said to his eldest sister, who stood weeping by his side, "It's all over. I perish, let no one else. Yes, I perish—I know it—I feel it. Let no one else. Bid the rest, in the name of one that speaks from