

contrary would be barbarous, unfeeling, and unnatural. The sentiment is also just and praiseworthy as tending to deprive death of its outward terrors to the imaginations of men, by diminishing the revolting nature of its concomitants, and by surrounding it with the circumstances of external decency, and ceremony, and respect, and the kindness of remembered sympathy and affection. But that men should raise up terrors to their imaginations from what they will in death cease to regard; from those very fleshly and earthly encumbrances from which the purified spirit will then exult in being freed, and by such considerations to distract the mind from what really is the sting of death, is folly indeed. For then our corruptible shall have put on incorruption, our mortal immortality. It is but the weakness of the flesh that causes such considerations to add to the sting of death, and they ought to be resisted and overcome; for they are destructive of our present peace, interfere with our active performance of the duties of life, and are obstructive of the growth and energy of that life of faith in the soul which alone can prepare us for death and for eternity. How wrong is it therefore, as is often the case, to indulge in high wrought descriptions of the loathsomeness of death, of dissolution, of the grave, merely for the sake of raising strong and powerful emotions in the mind, without considering that the effect of these emotions is to clog the spirit in its transition to glory by ideal and unfounded fears; as if these were aught to the freed spirit any more than the corruption of the shell which it has cast off to the insect amid the loveliness and vigour of its renovated form.

The same principles which we have now developed are applicable, in the second place, to the dread of death arising from the separation caused by it from all the interests, and ties, and sympathies, and pursuits, which so much engage and occupy us in this present world. So far as looking forward to the loss of these objects teaches us their fleeting nature, and leads us to seek a more secure and enduring possession to come, the exercise is most beneficial and important; but then we must beware that in dwelling too much upon the loss, we do not exaggerate in place of diminish the value, of these objects.

All must have felt the effect produced upon them by looking forward to a separation from things or persons which by habit or sympathy have become dear to them. Is it not still more to endear these objects and give them a still stronger hold upon our hearts? How common is the remark, we knew not how much we were attached to the things around us and to which we have become ac-

customed, till we were about to be deprived of them, or to our friends till we had the prospect of losing them. When a man through change of circumstances is obliged to remove from the home which has been the scene of tranquil enjoyment amid his family for many a year, it is then that he feels how firmly the cords of every association of till then almost neglected or forgotten, happiness have bound themselves round his heart. It is then that he feels all the bitterness of his loss, and the longer the period during which he looks forward to it, will every well known object entwine itself more firmly with his affections. The same, and in a higher degree, holds true in regard to the friends and relatives who are dear to us, in as far as these claim a greater interest in our hearts than any external objects can do. It is on the prospect of separation that he first discovers all their endearing qualities and attractions, till then unobserved or unheeded, rising to his view to darken by their contrast the gloom of his separation. And it is thus that by dwelling too much on the period of death as a separation from earthly objects, we run the risk instead of impressing our minds with a sense of their fleeting and unsatisfactory nature, and raising a longing after things eternal, of endearing them still more to our hearts, of magnifying their importance in our eyes, of increasing our dread of losing them, and of deadening our affections towards those things which are spiritual and heavenly. How common are such feelings among christians! How often do they dwell with mixed sentiments of dread and aversion on the period which is to separate them from the light and the warmth of life—from the fair creation which smiles around them—from the home of their dearest associations—from the scenes that are nearest to their remembrance—from the pleasant converse of beloved and well known countenances—from pursuits uncompleted—from schemes unaccomplished—from desires unattained, and is to terminate to them their earthly hopes, and their earthly career. But is not, my friends, the encouragement of such feelings unreasonable, antichristian, sinful? Is it not fostering earthly predilections and carnal inclinations at the expense of the peace and welfare of the soul? Is it not leading it to attach importance to what it must soon relinquish, and for ever? Is it not feeding it with food which cannot nourish it, and injuring its capacity for that which alone can support it—that food which alone shall be its sustenance in Heaven. All that is pure and excellent and heavenly in our affections and joys here below—all that is worthy of our regard we shall carry with us purified and ennobled and sanctified into glory. For our friends, for those who are