

"I fear I shall prove impatient, and thus dishonour Him who affords me His gracious presence now, and promises to be with me in the valley of the shadow of death, for now it is no more than shadow."

We closed the interview with solemn prayer that the great Author of our mercies would continue to afford this favour to His servant, would impress each of our minds with the solemn realities of eternity, teach us the full value of pardoning mercy, and enable us at the last to commend our souls into the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ. We then left him, and in a few hours he departed hence to another world in the full expectation of the joys of eternity. Nothing exciting in such a narrative, but how full of blessedness!

#### BREADTH OF HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY.

The great evil of sin and the great responsibility of the sinner have their proper measure in the infinite excellence and the infinite claims of the God sinned against. But it may have an affecting illustration in the fact that the sinner is responsible not only to God, but to all intelligent beings in the Universe, who have a common interest in the obedience of all God's subjects. All are so bound together under one Head that the sin, that is aimed at the Head, does violence to all. And, if one member suffer, all suffer with it. If our obligations bind us to the Maker and Ruler of the Universe, they bind us in a sense to every creature of the Universe.

An immortal and responsible existence, given to us as parts of God's moral kingdom, subjects us to be treated as contributing an influence to advance the weal or woe of the whole. And, since God has given us immortal minds, destined to endless expansion under His government, and capable of taking in an amount of joy or woe beyond all our present comprehension, it is nothing out of proportion for the sinner to be treated as if he were responsible, not only to God for the violence done to His authority, but also to all intelligent creatures for the injurious results of sin, actual or possible, upon their interests.

This view may aid to extend our conceptions of the evil of sin, just as a survey of the vastness of the Creation may help us to think of the immensity of the Creator. And yet, after all has been said, the great malignity of sin, yea, its great length and breadth, consists in its violation of Divine authority and infinite excellence. This is so great that the comparison extinguishes the other, and forces us to say, "Against Thee, and Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight."

#### A FRAGMENT.

"You will never be any thing but a half-way Christian, then, John."

"Nonsense. William, you are too strict by half. I wonder how many professors of religion in this place come up to your mark?"

"To my mark! It is not my mark by any means. The standard is that of the Lord Jesus Christ; and we have no reason to believe ourselves Christians, unless we make His standard ours also."

"But what will you do with the many members of churches, who are far enough from living as you counsel? You don't intend, I suppose, to cast away the greatest of the Christian virtues, charity, and condemn them in a mass to perdition? You seem so determined to live after the strictest sect of the Pharisees that I really fear you may be drawn into the sin of judging others uncharitably."

"There may be danger, and I thank you for the caution. I will strive to watch against being drawn into this sin, and I hope by Divine favour to be preserved from its influence. But we are as much bound, so far as our opportunities allow, to judge correctly as to judge charitably of others. I know that my own character is very

far from what it should be, and I realise, also, that, in any respect I am better than others, God alone has made me to differ. Still I believe, we wrong the cause of our Master, when we regard those as Christians who fall very far short of the Bible standard. Cecil says, that there are some who loudly say that they are not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, but he adds that the Gospel may well be ashamed of them."

"That is true, I am sure, with regard to some professors of the religion of Jesus. But on the other hand some may be condemned for their needless singularity."

"Very few, very few indeed! if this singularity consists in a constant seeking after God, and in a faithful and self-denying observance of all duties toward their fellow-men. It is the inconsistent professor who is commonly condemned, even by those whose hearts are entirely alienated from God. You do not often hear the language of censure applied to the humble, devoted Christian, whose heart is full of love to God and man. Such an one commands respect, and obtains it more or less from all. He, and such as he, are 'the salt of the earth,' 'the light of the world,' advancing the cause of their Divine Master, even more by their holy, consistent life than by their words of solemn warning and judicious counsel."

The two friends separated, but the topic of conversation was not forgotten by either.

#### GOD'S SMITTEN ONES.

One of the hardest of all the graces which a child of God is called upon to exercise is submission under afflictive providences. Comparatively easy is it to do the will of God as regards active Christian duties. We can overcome natural inactivity, and tutor ourselves to visiting the sick, distributing tracts, teaching in the Sabbath-school, and co-operating in various benevolent enterprises with comparatively little difficulty. At the outset, indeed, we may prefer to have our time occupied with secular employments, or the intervals devoted to self-indulgence; but, God's grace helping us, these hindrances can be overcome, and even good-doing may by habit become in some sense natural to us. It is the suffering of God's righteous will, which is the hardest trial to which our poor humanity is subjected. Here it is that faith and patience meet their severest tests.

A very different thing it is to endure languor and bodily torture week after week from going every Sabbath morning to teach an hour in the Sabbath-school. A very different thing it is to see the dear objects of our heart's affections sickening, languishing, passing through the slow but certain progress to the grave, and at last disappearing away out of sight here for ever; or, what is worse, to see them still living, to suffer and suffer on, by strange and mysterious visitations, a thousand deaths—very different is this from making an occasional visit to friends in trouble, or from scattering a few tracts from door to door among the destitute. A very different thing it is, to find all our cherished plans broken in upon until the very object, for which life had been laid out, seems to be utterly defeated—to find the hand of God heavy upon us in some visitation, which eats as a canker-worm into the depths of the soul, blasting every joy, leaving scarce any thing earthly to live for, and yet so shutting up every way of escape that there is no resource but just to stand still and endure—very different is this from all the active efforts we could be called on to put forth in helping on the Church's schemes of benevolence.

And yet, even under trials severe as these may be—shutting up the Christian until he can see no light, until he feels as if God had forgotten to be gracious, and His mercy had clean gone for ever—until the grave seems to offer the only hope for relief, and even that will not open to receive him—even here grace can help the sufferer. Fiery fires, such as are these, may alarm, or fill with discouragement and dismay the

shrinking believer, but the flames shall only consume away his dross, and not a hair of his head shall be hurt. God's grace has sufficed for apostles, martyrs, way-worn and tempest-tossed saints in all ages, so that, in the end, sorrow has been turned into joy; and that grace is still all-sufficient and ever ready. A power Divine there is in reserve, and as the day is, so shall strength be apportioned to God's afflicted ones. Prayer may seem almost a mockery, the promises idle words, and the writhing heart, oppressed to what seems the last extremity, feeling it can bear no more, and yet seeing no prospect of help, may be tempted to impugn the righteousness of God's ways, and sit down in stupid despair, but we must remember that the darkest hour of the night is often that which precedes the dawn—that, though God may seem to tarry, He will yet graciously reveal Himself—that, though "weeping may endure for a night, joy cometh in the morning." Smitten one! hope thou in God. Thou shalt yet praise Him. Though the night be long and dreary, the morning cometh. Wait patiently, and the waters shall at length subside, and the rainbow of a covenant-keeping God shall illumine the dark clouds which have so long been pouring their fury upon you.—*Presbyterian*.

#### GOING TO THE GRAVE.

The paths which men tread in life are numerous and diversified; and yet they have one thing in common—they converge to a single point, and that is the grave.

Whether we tread the dizzy heights of fame, and hear the hosannas of the multitude rolling up the mountain side, or move in the valley unknown and unknown; whether the heart be sad with sorrow and the cheek pale with grief, or the song upon the lip and gladness in the bosom; whether blessing or blighting, whether harming or helping in the matter of man's salvation; wherever we may be, or whatever we may be doing, yet our steps are constantly and inevitably tending to the tomb,

"And our hearts, though stout and brave,  
Still, like muffled drums, are beating  
Funeral marches to the grave."

On the brow of the infant just awakening to conscious life, a mother smile its sunshine, a mother's tear its dew-drop; and upon that of the old man, on which many a care has cast its shadow, and many a grief graven its line; upon the brow of the matron and that of the maiden, of buoyant youth and strong manhood—on each is the simple and solemn inscription, *Going to the grave*. Years are but arches sprung over our pathway to the sepulchre; and how many of us, and how many thousands of our race, are now moving under the last of these arches! Every beating pulse and every heaving breath tell us that some mortal has reached the goal of the grave, and likewise warn us that we are treading paths which any moment may have the same termination.

We would not be ignorant of the frailty of man's life even without the teachings of God's Word. The wail of every mourner, the coffin and the crape, the hearse and the funeral, the opened earth, the mound and the graven marble of the city of the dead, the habiliments of mourning, the orphan's tears and the widow's desolation, are every day preaching to us of man's mortality. How fearful a thing is sin, which has hung so vast and so dark a shadow over our present life! Yet there comes a voice of hope, breaking through the silence of that gloom, and shines from the Cross a light dissipating its darkness: "I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." And again it is declared by the Son of God, "Because I live ye shall live also."

If then his life be "hid in Christ," if the anchor of his hope be firmly fixed, "entering into that within the veil," why should the believer be sad, or wish to retrace a single step in his march to the grave?

I knew of a little girl, but seven years of age, who, when brought to the hour of death, as a mother and brothers and sisters, almost heart-