

THE CHRISTIAN MIRROR.

DEVOTED TO THE INTERESTS OF RELIGION AND GENERAL LITERATURE.

"MANY SHALL RUN TO AND FRO, AND KNOWLEDGE SHALL BE INCREASED."—DANIEL xii. 4.

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GENERAL LITERATURE.

THE INDIAN SUMMER.

In the melancholy month of October, when the variegated tints of the autumnal landscape begin to fade away into the pale and sickly hue of death, a few soft, delicious days, called the Indian Summer, steal in upon the close of the year, and, like a second spring, breathe a balm round the departing season, and light up with a smile the pallid features of the dying year. They resemble those calm and lucid intervals, which sometimes precede the last hour of slow decline—mantling the cheek with a glow of health—breathing tranquillity around the drooping heart—and, though seeming to indicate that the fountains of life are springing out afresh, are but the sad and sure precursors of dissolution—the last earthly sabbath

Of a spirit who longs for a longer day,
And is ready to wing its flight away.

I was once making a tour, at this season of the year, in the interior of New England. The rays of the setting sun glanced from the windows and shingle roofs of the little farm houses scattered over the landscape; and the soft hues of declining day were gradually spreading over the scene. The harvest had already been gathered in, and I could hear the indistinct sound of the flail from the distant threshing floor. Now and then a white cloud floated before the sun, and its long shadow swept across the stubble field, and climbed the neighbouring hill. The tap of a solitary woodpecker echoed from the orchard; and, at intervals, the hollow gust passed like a voice amid the trees, scattering the coloured leaves, and shaking down the ruddy apples.

As I rode slowly along, I approached a neat farm-house, that stood upon the slope of a gentle hill. There was an air of plenty about it, that bespoke it the residence of one of the better class of farmers. Beyond it, the spire of a village church rose from the clump of trees; and, to the westward, lay a long cultivated valley, with a rivulet winding like a strip of silver through it, and bound on the opposite side by a chain of high, rugged mountain.

A number of horses stood tied to a rail in front of the house, and there was a crowd of peasants, in their best attire, at the doors and windows. I saw at once, by the sadness of every countenance, and the half-audible tones of voice in which they addressed each other, that they were assembled to perform the last pious duties of the living to the dead. Some poor child of dust was to be consigned to its long home. I alighted, and entered the house. I feared that I might be an intruder upon that scene of grief; but a feeling of painful and melancholy curiosity prompted me on. The house was filled with country people from the neighbouring villages, seated round with that silent decorum which in the country is always observed on such occasions. I passed through the crowd to the chamber, in which, according to the custom of New England, the body of the deceased was laid out in all the appalling habiliments of the grave. The coffin was placed upon a table in the middle of the room. Several of the villagers were gazing upon the corpse; and as they turned away, speaking to each other in whispers of the ravages of death, I drew near, and looked for a moment upon those sad remains of humanity. The countenance was calm and beautiful, and the pallid lips apart, as if the last sigh had just left them. On the coffin plate I read the name and age of the deceased: she had been cut off in the bloom of life.

As I gazed upon the features of death before me, my heart rebuked me; there was something cold and heartless, in thus gazing idly upon the relics of one whom I had not known in life: and I turned away with an emotion of more than sorrow. I look upon the last remains of a friend, as something that death has hallowed; the dust of one whom I had loved in life, should be loved in death. I should feel that I were doing violence to the tender sympathies of affection, in thus exposing the relics of a friend to the idle curiosity of the world: for the world could never feel the emotion that harrowed up my soul, nor taste the bitterness with which my heart was running over.

At length the village clergyman arrived, and the funeral procession moved towards the church. The mother of the deceased followed the bier, supported by the clergyman, who tried in vain to administer consolation to a broken heart. She gave way to the violence of her grief, and wept aloud. Beside her walked a young man, who seemed to struggle with his sorrow, and strove to hide from the world what was passing in his bosom.

The church stood upon the outskirts of the village, and a few old trees threw their soft, religious shade around its portals. The tower was old and dilapidated, and the occasional toll of its bell, as it swung solemnly along the landscape, deepened the soft melody of the scene.

I followed the funeral train at a distance, and entered the church. The bier was placed at the head of the principal aisle, and after a moment's pause, the clergyman arose, and commenced the funeral service with prayer. It was simple and impressive; and, as the good man prayed, his countenance glowed with pure and fervent piety. He said there was a rest for the people of God, where all tears should be wiped from their eyes, and where there should be no more sorrow or care. A hymn was then sung, appropriate to the occasion: it was from the writings of Dr. Watts, beginning,

"Unveil thy bosom, faithful tomb:
Take this new treasure to thy trust,
And give these sacred relics room
To slumber in the silent dust."

The pauses were interrupted by the sobs of the mother—it was touching in the extreme. When it ceased, the aged pastor arose and addressed his simple audience. Several times his voice faltered with emotion. The deceased had been a favourite disciple since her residence in the village, and he had watched over her slow decay with all the tender solicitude of a father. As he spoke of her gentle nature—of her patience in sickness—of her unrepining approach to the grave—of the bitterness of death—and of the darkness and silence of the narrow house—the younger part of the audience were moved to tears. Most of them had known her in life, and could repeat some little history of her kindness and benevolence. She had visited the cottages of the poor—she had soothed the couch of pain—she had wiped away the mourner's tears!

When the funeral service was finished, the procession again formed, and moved towards the graveyard. It was a sunny spot, upon a gentle hill, where one solitary beech tree threw its shade upon a few mouldering tombstones. They were the last mementos of the early settlers and patriarchs of the neighbourhood, and were overgrown with grass and branches of the wild rose. Beside them there was an open grave; the bier was placed upon its brink, and the coffin slowly and carefully let down into it; the mother came to take her last farewell—it was a scene of heart-

rending grief. She paused, and gazed wistfully into the grave. Her heart was buried there. At length, she tore herself away in agony; and, as she passed from the spot, I could read in her countenance that the strongest tie which held her to the world, had given way.

The rest of the procession passed in order by the grave, and each cast into it some slight token of affection, a sprig of rosemary, or some other sweet-scented herb. I watched the mournful procession, returning along the dusty road, and, when it finally disappeared behind the woodland, I found myself alone in the graveyard. I sat down upon a moss-grown stone, and fell into a train of melancholy thoughts. The gray of twilight overshadowed the scene—the wind rushing by in hollow gusts, sighed in the long grass of the grave, and swept the rustling leaves in eddies around me. Side by side, beneath me, slept the hoary head of age, and the blighted heart of youth—mortality, which had long since mouldered back to dust, and that from which the spirit had just departed. I scraped away the moss and the grass from the tombstone on which I sat, and endeavoured to decipher the inscription. The name was entirely blotted out, and the rude ornaments were mouldering away. Beside it was the grave that had just closed over its tenant. What a theme for meditation!—the grave that had been closed for years, and that upon which the mark of the spade was still visible!—one whose very name was forgotten, and whose last earthly record had wasted away! and one over whom the grass had not yet grown, nor the shadows of night descended!

When I returned to the village, I learned the history of the deceased: it was simple, but to me affecting.

[To be continued.]

WISDOM AND CONTENTMENT. AN ALLEGORY.

THERE lived in a lowly cot a maid whose name was CONTENTMENT. This virgin wished not for pomp or grandeur—what nature gave was all her desire. Her food was from the green herbage of the field, and the rich juice of the grape. Her drink was from the crystal streamlet. Her clothing was homely. Her countenance wore a roseate bloom of health, while lustre sparkled from her radiant eyes. Her neck was whiter than alabaster, while her limbs, which could boast the swiftness of a wild deer, were as proportionate as nature could form them. Far retired from the world, she knew not the follies of it. Her every wish was gratified in her humble store—in short, she was happy.

One day, as she was reclining herself on a verdant bank, a youth appeared before her. An ethereal brightness shone around him; he seemed to tread upon the "seraph wings of ecstasy" the moment he beheld this beautiful maid; he loved her from his soul, and all his power drooped to his love. She was inspired with the same passion; they attentively viewed each other, and every minute their love increased. Oh! thought the youth, (whose name was WISDOM,) "were that charming object in my possession, how happy would I be!" An innumerable train of ideas crowded upon his imagination, as he thus addressed the beautiful damsel:—

"Angelic maid, I know I have seen the world, and with disgust spurned the innumerable follies with which it abounds. I have tasted those false pleasures, which for a time delude the silly—but soon they sickened before me, and I left them. Fashion, pomp, and all such insignificant bubbles, I freely resign for thee. Thou art a jewel ten