

what we allude to, but the dwelling upon the painful and revolting accompaniments of death, merely as such—merely as so many evils attending that change; and must not the effect of so doing be to make even those who look for a better and surer hope to come, dread in some degree the approach even of what they believe will be to them the gate to their city of promise, and make it more hard for them to burst the ties of their present state of being, even although they feel them to be, as they really are, the fetters of a heavy bondage? It is true that these are trials which all must undergo in their passage hence; and we should accustom ourselves so to look them in the face as that our spirits, subjected as they are, to be influenced by the state of our bodily frame while it continues here below to enclose them, shall not be unnerved and overcome when the period of trial arrives. But then it is not by dwelling upon the terrors that this strength is to be obtained. As the traveller who must struggle with the pitiless storm, and the darkness of night, and the dangers of the country, and the toilsomeness of the road, to reach the home of his hopes, keeps his mind from dwelling on the hazard, the difficulties and the fatigue of the journey, repels the new terrors which his imagination would suggest to him at every step, and cheers his spirits by thinking of the blazing faggots of his own hearth, of the cheerful faces and joyful welcome which await his return; so the christian who would approach calm and undismayed the valley of the shadow of death, must not dwell merely upon its terrors, and thus exaggerate his fears and enervate his resolution, but must fix the eye of his faith upon the star of promise—inspiring confidence and courage, and strength—which points to the mansions of his Father's house—his home of everlasting blessedness. If we allow our imaginations to rest too much upon the terrors of the journey, shall we not be apt to forget the objects and encouragements, and in such a state of mind can we be well prepared to enter upon it? No, my brethren, it is by keeping constantly in our view, the high and glorious object to which we press on, by encouraging a well grounded confidence in the armour of salvation, in the promises of God, and the spirit of God, to defend and strengthen us, that shall most successfully banish every fear and prepare and man ourselves for the enterprise. And yet how often and how foolishly do we find men filling their imaginations with pernicious fears, and fostering their short sighted prejudices, by selecting and searching for, and dwelling, one would almost think, with a sort of morbid satisfaction on all that is painful, or disgusting, or revolting in the accompaniments of

death! Why should we magnify to our fears the pains of our last malady? Why dwell upon the convulsive pangs that may precede our dissolution? For what end unceasingly summon up to our thoughts the gloom of the chamber of death? Why magnify our disgust by what may happen to our mortal remains? Why lay open the tomb continually to our view? Why glut the imagination with the loathsomeness of the charnel house? These are not thoughts or feelings surely to be dwelt upon—to be encouraged. They will perhaps force themselves upon us at times, but surely they ought to be restrained and resisted. They are thoughts which weigh down the spirit with earthly, with carnal cares, and fears, and anxieties, and prevent its free and unencumbered flight towards those glorious and happy regions which it is destined to occupy. As common instances however of such feelings, how often do we find pious christians embitter their lives, and add many terrors to death by the dread of what may happen to their mortal remains—of not enjoying it may be what they call a christian burial—of not receiving after death the usual rites and solemnities—by the fear of meeting a watery grave—of their bodies being tossed by the waves and the tempests, and their bones left to whiten upon a strange and distant shore—or to think of their being exposed upon the field of battle, a prey to unclean birds and beasts of rapine—or to perish by fire, and their ashes to be scattered by the four winds of Heaven, leaving not a trace of their existence—or to think that in a time of pestilence when hundreds upon hundreds are swept away by its deadly breath some of the more ordinary formalities may be dispensed with—to think that they may be heaped in one common grave with many others of its victims—or that indignities may be offered to their remains! These and a thousand nameless fears of a like nature, taking possession of the imagination, have embittered the approach of death to many a pious christian, and have filled with terrors and anxieties a period which more than in any other needed the influence of calm undivided reflection, self examination and prayer, to prepare him for the momentous realities of his great change.

To the living we grant, that according to the constitution of our minds such considerations necessarily raise painful and revolting feelings. We naturally wish that the friends we have loved in life should be honoured in their remains in death. The feeling is proper and creditable to our hearts; the mortal relics being associated with the living spirit by which they were animated. In respecting them we honor it. The casket is still precious as recalling the jewel which it contained.