

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.

(CONCLUDED.)

THE mother had been left a widow with two children, a son and daughter. The son had been too soon exposed to the temptations of the world—had become dissolute, and was carried away by the frenzy of intemperance. This almost broke her heart, but it could not alienate her affection. There is something so patient and enduring in the love of a mother! It is so kind to us—so consoling—so forgiving! The world deceives us, but that deceives us not—friends forsake us, but that forsakes us not; we may wound it, we may abandon it, we may forget it—but it will never wound, nor abandon, nor forget us!

The daughter was delicate and feeble. She sickened in her mother's arms, and fell into a slow decline. Her brother's ingratitude had stricken her too. Those who have watched the progress of slow and wasting decline, may recollect how fondly the sufferer will cling to some favourite wish, whose gratification she thinks may strengthen her wasted frame, and which, though we are persuaded it will be useless to grant, we feel it cruelly to deny. With this hope, she had longed for the calm retirement of the country, and had come with her mother into the bosom of these solitudes, to breathe their exhilarating air, and to forget, in the calm of rural life, the cares that seemed to hurry on the progress of the disease. There is a quiet charm in rural occupations, which soothes and tranquilizes the soul; and the invalid, that is heart-sick with the noise of the city, retires to the shades of country life, finds the hope of existence renewed, and something taken away from the bitterness of death.

When the poor girl saw her young friends around her in the bloom of health and hilarity of youth, and she alone drooping and sickly, she felt that it was hard to die. But in the shades of the country, the gaiety of the world was forgotten. No earthly desire intruded to overshadow the soft serenity of her soul; and, when the last hope of life forsook her, a voice seemed to whisper, that in the sleep of death no cares intruded, and that they were blessed who die in the Lord.

The summer passed away in rural occupations, and the simple pastimes of country life. She was regular in her devotions at the village church on Sundays, and after the service, would visit the cottages of the poor with her mother, or stroll along the woodland, and listen to the song of the birds, and the melancholy ripple of the brook. At such times she would speak touchingly of her own fate, and look up with tears into her mother's face. Then her thoughts would wander back to earlier days—to her young companions—to her brother. When she spoke of him, she wept as though her heart would break. They were nearly of the same age, had been educated together, and had loved each other with all the tenderness of brotherly love. There was something terrible in the idea that he had forgotten her, just as she was dropping into the grave. But there are sometimes alienations of the heart, which even the dark anticipations of death cannot change.

At length the autumn came—that sober season, whose very beauty reminds us of dissolution and decay. The summer birds had flown, the leaf changed its hue, and the wind rustled mournfully amid the trees. As the season advanced, the health of the invalid gradually declined. The lamp of life was nearly exhausted. Her rambles became confined to a little garden, where she would sometimes stroll out of a morning to gather

flowers for her window. The fresh morning air seemed to revive her; but, towards the close of day, the hectic would flush her cheek, and but too plainly indicated that there was no longer any hope of life.

The mother watched her dying child with an anguish, that none but a mother's heart can feel. She would sit, and gaze wistfully upon her as she slept, and pour out her soul in prayer, that this last solace of declining years might yet be spared her. But the days of her child were numbered. She had become calm and resigned, and her soul seemed to be springing up to a pure and heavenly joy. Religion had irradiated the gloom of the sick chamber, and brightened the pathway of the tomb. Death had no longer a sting, nor the grave a victory.

The soft, delightful days of the Indian summer succeeded, smiling on the year's decline. The poor sick girl was too sick to leave her chamber; but she would sit for hours together at the open window, and enjoy the calm of the autumnal landscape. One evening she was thus seated, watching the setting sun, as it sunk slowly behind the blue hills, dying in crimson the clouds of the western sky, and tinging the air with soft, purple light. Her feelings had taken a calm from the quiet of the scene; and she thought how sweet it were that life should close, like the close of an autumnal day, and the clouds of death catch the radiance of a glorious and eternal morning.

A little bird, that had been the companion of her sickness, was fluttering in its cage beside her, and singing with a merry heart from its wicker prison. She listened a moment to its song with a feeling of tenderness, and sighed. 'Thou hast cheered my sick chamber with thy cheerful voice,' said she, 'and hast shared with me my long captivity. I shall soon be free, and I will not leave thee here a prisoner.' As she spoke, she opened the door of the cage; the bird darted forth from the window, balanced itself a moment on its wings, as if to say farewell, and then rose up into the sky with a song of delight.

As she watched her little favourite floating upwards in the soft evening air, and growing smaller and smaller until it diminished to a little speck in the blue heaven, her attention was arrested by the sound of a horse's hoofs. A moment after, the rider dismounted at the door. When she beheld him, her cheek became suddenly flushed, and then turned deadly pale again. She started up, and rushed towards the door, but her strength failed her; she faltered, and sunk into her mother's arms in a swoon. Almost at the same moment the door opened, and her brother entered the room.

The ties of nature had been loosened, but were too strong to be broken. The rebukes of conscience had arisen above the song of the revel, and the maddening glee of drunkenness. Haunted by fearful phantoms, and full of mental terrors, he had hurried away from the scenes of debauch, hoping to atone for his errors, by future care and solicitude. His mother embraced him with all the tender yearnings of a mother's heart. Sorrow had chastened every reproachful feeling, silenced every sentiment of reproof. She had already forgotten all past unkindness.

In the meantime, the poor invalid was carried to bed insensible; and an hour passed before signs of returning life appeared. A small taper threw its pale and tremulous rays around the chamber, and her brother sat by her bedside, silently and anxiously watching her cold, inanimate features. At length, a slight colour flushed her cheek; her lips moved, as if she were endeavouring to articulate something; then she sighed deeply, and languidly opened her eyes, as if awakening from a

deep sleep. Her mother was bending over her; she threw her arms about her neck, and kissed her.

"Mother," said she, in a soft and almost inaudible voice, "I have had such a dream!—I thought that George had come back again; and that we were happy; and that I should not die—not yet. But no, it was not a dream," continued she, raising her head from the pillow, and gazing wistfully about the room. "He has come back again—and we are happy—and, oh! mother, must I die?" Here she fell back upon her pillow, and covering her face with both hands, burst into tears.

Her brother, who sat by the bedside, hidden by the curtain, could no longer withstand the violence of his emotions. He caught her in his arms, and kissed her tears away. She unclosed her eyes, smiled, and faintly articulated, "Dear George"—the rest died upon her lips. It was nature's last effort. She turned her eyes from him to her mother—then back—then to her mother again; her lips moved—an ashy hue spread over her countenance—and she expired with a sigh.

Such was the history of the deceased, as I gathered it from one of the villagers. I continued my journey the next morning, and passed by the graveyard. The sun shone softly upon it, and the dew glistened upon the turf. It seemed to me an image of the morning of that eternal day, when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality.

RELIGIOUS LITERATURE.

NO HOPE!

THE night must be very dark that has no star. That heart must be very dark that has no hope. Whose path is not cheered by the star of hope? The sailor fixes his eyes upon it in the wilderness of the sea. The traveller in the desert passes on his weary way, while hope promises that his journey's end is near. The Christian—a mariner in a boisterous sea—a traveller in a howling wilderness—is sustained by hope, as an anchor to his soul.

SINNERS HAVE HOPE. It can scarcely be possible that any man can live unconcerned, without some secret assurance of future good. Despair would soon wear out life. But it must be a miserable hope that an impenitent sinner hugs to his heart. It must prove like the phantom Æneæ embraced, which vanished as often as he caught it in his arms. There is the hope of the hypocrite—it deceives its owner more than others. But the sinner thinks any hope better than none, and hangs his eternity on a spider's web.

One hopes in the fullness of the atonement.—He thinks Christ has made so glorious a sacrifice for sinners, that none need fear of failing to find forgiveness. He loves to dwell on the all-sufficiency of the atonement, and talks largely on being redeemed among the multitude that no man can number. But he makes a fatal mistake. If the atonement had been ten thousand times more full and free, it would not avail for him, unless he complied with the terms on which it was offered. If Christ had died but for one sinner, that sinner could not be saved unless he repented and believed. The merits of that sacrifice must be applied by the Holy Spirit, or it has been made in vain. All the rocks on earth would not avail to sustain a house unless it were built upon them. The sinner must find the Saviour, and build on him, or when the storms of trial come, he will discover, too late, that his house was built upon