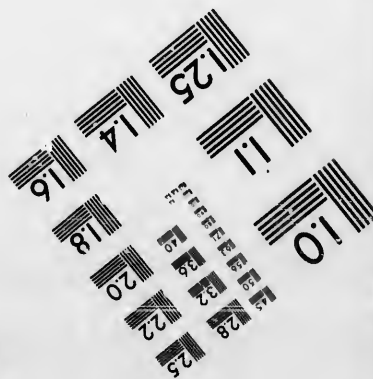
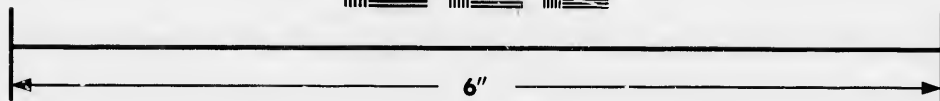
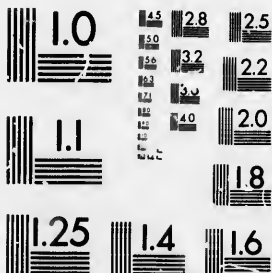


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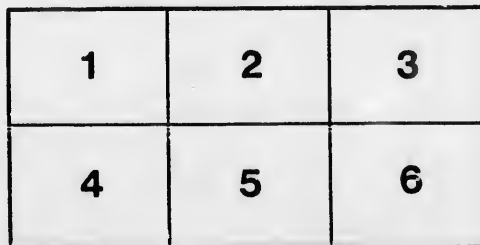
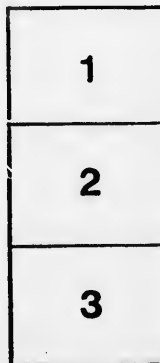
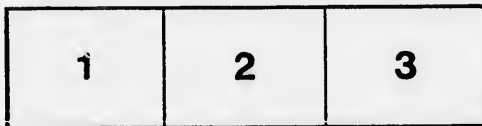
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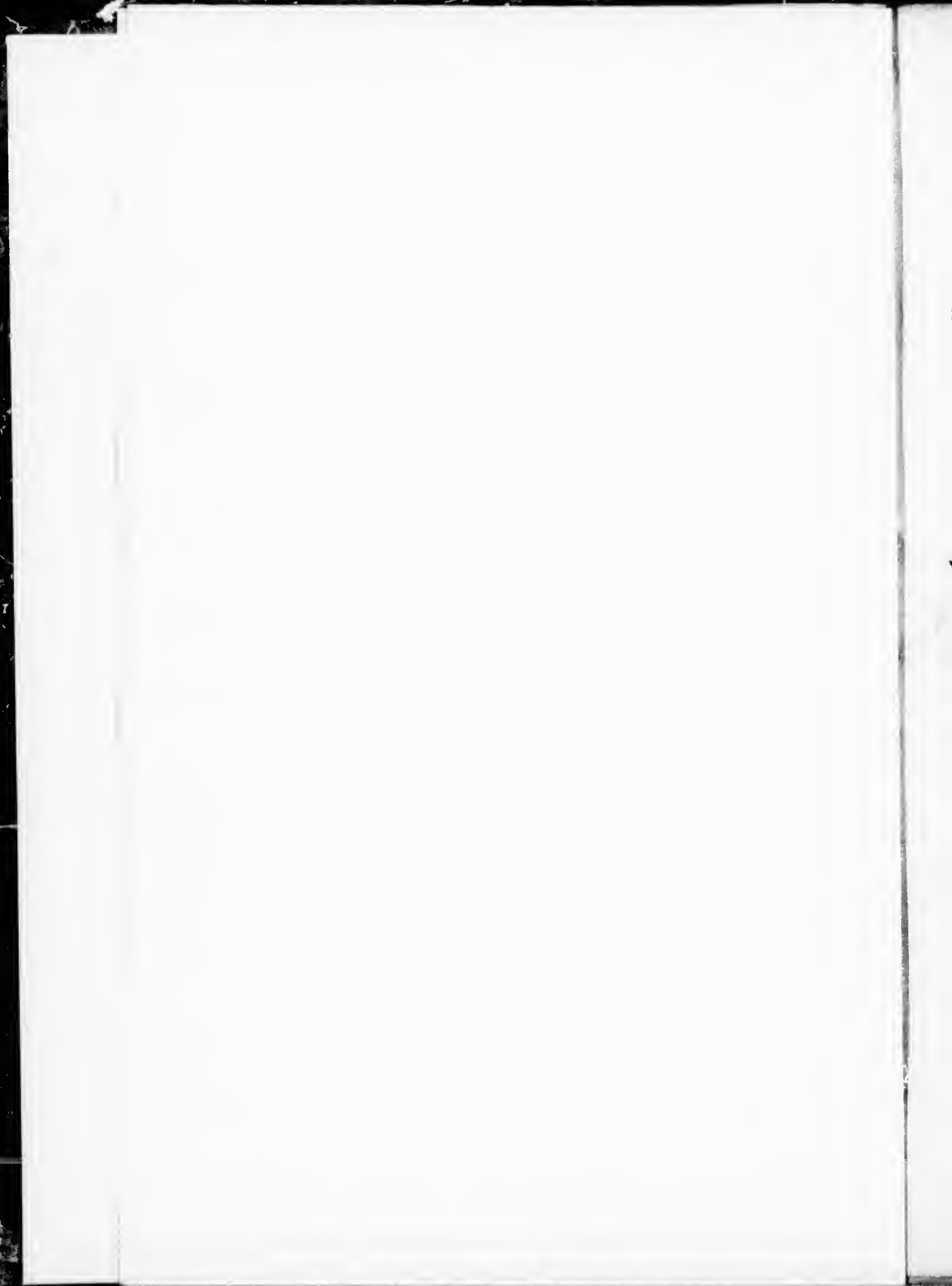
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*Mr Justice. W. L. L. L.*

252.16

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**A SERMON**

PREACHED IN

ST. PETER'S CHURCH, COBOURG, ON SUNDAY THE  
14TH OCTOBER, 1838,

ON OCCASION OF THE DEATH OF

**MRS. BOULTON,**

WIFE OF GEORGE STRANGE BOULTON, ESQUIRE, M.P.P.

---

BY THE REV. A. N. BETHUNE, RECTOR OF  
COBOURG.

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PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE FRIENDS OF THE  
DECEASED.

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**Cobourg, A. C.**

R. D. CHATTERTON, PRINTER.

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## S E R M O N .

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I. CORINTHIANS, VII. 29.—BUT THIS I SAY, BRETHREN, THE TIME IS SHORT.

The frailness of the human body—the brevity of life—the shortness and the uncertainty of our stay in this probationary world—these are things, my brethren, the truth and force of which there is but too frequent a recurrence of painful circumstances to bring home to our careless and worldly hearts. The toll of the death-bell—the sad and slow procession preceded by the sable hearse—the gathered crowd around the freshly-opened grave—the clattering of congenial earth and ashes upon the last narrow tenement of mortality—these are scenes which occur often enough to remind us, that although the world is a beautiful and a smiling world, it contains many a habitation of mourning ; that fair and garnished as this world is, it is not our settled abode—it is



net our continuing city—it is not our proper country, nor our permanent home.

Many, already, are the memorials of life's frailness and brevity in the receptacle of the dead which encompasses this house of prayer; and right and meet it is, when we approach this holy edifice to hold communion with our God, that the sense of our nothingness should be deepened and quickened by these visible traces of the common spoiler death; that, when we bend the knee in prayer to the Father of mercies and raise to his throne the voice of supplication, we may apply the more earnestly to the mercy-seat, from these surrounding evidences that "the time is short."

Yes, even in this very season of the year, there is something consonant to the train of feeling which the words that I have just repeated are so powerfully calculated to awaken,—that we have but a transient hold upon the joys of the world, that to all its creatures and inhabitants "the time is short." A little ago, we saw the world in the fulness of its beauty;—a little ago, the trees and plants wore all the luxuriance of their green; the flowers expanded their matchless tints to the balmy air, and threw their per-

fume upon the breeze ; the harvest waved in the fields, and the fruits clustered upon the boughs. A change—indicative of the briefness of this glory and the perishableness of this beauty—has already come over the scene. The green leaf is seared, and is tinged with the hues of decay ; the beauteous flower is withered ; the blight of the frost is fast stripping the trees of their foliage !

Striking memorial this of the fragility and decay of other plants which God's own hand hath planted. The material frame with which He was pleased to clothe us whom he made in his own "image and likeness," has its season of freshness and strength : it exhibits for a time the perfection of its workmanship, and reveals the omnipotent power of the Architect who so framed and adorned it ; but the spoiler comes, a blight arrives, that beauty withers in an hour, that strength is prostrated—the heart throbs no more, the voice is mute, the "silver chord" is snapped, the "golden bowl" is broken.

Once the Almighty permitted a longer endurance of the fleshly tabernacle, which is now so soon dissolved. Adam, the first victim of the arts of Satan, and through his fall the author of

sin and death to all his posterity, lived through a period of 930 years ; and almost a thousand years were completed by one of his descendants, Methusaleh. Contrasted with that protracted life of the first fathers of mankind, how brief is the term of human existence now ! The waters of the deluge have been the instrument of a change in the aspect of the world and in the constitution of its inhabitants ; and while it has swept away and seemingly extinguished forever many animals known before that period, it has abridged the term of human years to a span indeed. Since that period, the Scriptures of God are rich in images and descriptions to designate the frailness, the nothingness of the human tabernacle. "Dust thou art"—is the humbling representation which the Almighty himself has given of what constitutes the pride and glory of boastful man. Job, amid the pathetic touches of that eloquence which his afflictions kindled, speaks of man as "accomplishing, like a hireling, his day ;" and in the depth of his distresses, he adds, "my days are swifter than a post—they flee away—they are passed as swift ships, as the eagle that hasteth to the prey." The "weaver's shuttle," the "fading leaf," the "withering grass," the "perishing flower,"—all these are images under

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which the sacred volume reveals the perishable-  
 ness of man ; and to present his frailness in the  
 most striking view—to exhibit the life on which  
 we are so prone to lean in that character which  
 truth requires, the Psalmist exclaims, “ mine age  
 is even *as nothing*.”

“ As nothing,” indeed ! For, granting to man  
 the full amount of years which God, in his mercy,  
 ever permits him to reach, how great is the sub-  
 traction to be made ! Till the season of child-  
 hood is passed, and the mind is formed, and the  
 corporeal frame reaches to its maturity, how many  
 years must be deducted ! And of the three-score  
 years and ten, which man is sometimes allowed  
 to arrive at, fully one-third is occupied in sleep !  
 And alas ! if we look to the days of idleness  
 which are passed—to the grievous amount of time  
 consumed in unprofitable pursuits—yes, even in  
 ungodly occupations,—how much must the re-  
 flection be deepened and saddened, that human  
 existence is a frail and brittle thing ! How for-  
 cibly must come home to every heart the truth of  
 what the Apostle utters in the text,—“ Brethren,  
 the time is short !”

If to the proofs within and around us of our

fragility—if to the evidence of the losses which our time endures, be added the consideration of *all that is to be done* within the brief limit of human life, we shall the more deeply feel, and the more readily confess that “the time is short.”—It is not enough, my brethren, that I remind you of worldly engagements—of the cares and anxieties respecting your earthly prospects which so often harass your minds and distress your hearts—of the toil that you are required daily to endure—of the weariness and watchfulness which consumes your strength and wastes your spirits,—I do not advert to these things alone in endeavouring to strengthen the conviction that for all the needful purposes of life “the time is short.” There is committed to us a higher responsibility than the provision for our daily wants,—the care and culture of the never-dying soul. We have our God to glorify not only with our lips but in our lives; we have, through the means revealed by the Saviour who shed his blood for us, a heaven to win. And in winning heaven, we escape the torments of hell; we are saved from the blackness of darkness to which the unrepentant and unreconciled are condemned for ever; we are delivered from the anguish of unquenchable fire, from the sting of the worm that never dieth.

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These, my brethren, are truths which our own experience, as well as the Scriptures of God, force upon us; surely, then, we shall not be content with their mere recital, or subscribe to them as authentic and undoubted, without allowing a practical influence from them upon our minds and hearts. And the Apostle happily instructs us in the practical inferences we are to draw from the picture of life's brevity which he so forcibly sets before us. But let me adduce his own words:—  
 "Brethren, the time is short; it remaineth (therefore) that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away."

These are words, it becomes us to recollect, which were spoken during the days of the Church's persecution; when, in addition to the natural shortness and uncertainty of life, its precariousness was fearfully increased by the prevailing hatred of the name of Jesus, and the hunting of his followers even unto death. It was, certainly, not then a time to cling too fondly to

the endearing ties of life—to yield to its sorrows, or to be engaged with its joys—to be engrossed with its business, or to lean upon its gratifications and prospects. “It remaineth,” he says, “that they that have wives, be as though they had none.” There is no religion in the world—I need scarcely my brethren, remind you of that—which presupposes and which cultivates a deeper attachment to those whom the laws of God as well as of nature require us to love and cherish, than does the religion of the blessed Jesus. In proof of this we may look to his own example. Never was he an unfeeling spectator of human misery. It was compassion for a perishing world which brought him down from the glories of heaven, and nailed him to the cross. It was compassion which wrung his soul with sorrow, as he looked upon Jerusalem, and foresaw the wretchedness and ruin which were so soon to overtake that infatuated city. It was the compassion of his heart which caused him to weep over the grave of Lazarus—to mingle his tears with those of the mourning sisters ; and thus he teaches us that we may, without any surrender of our Christian principles, grieve and mourn when we are bereaved of those whom we love. Our religion, it is true, allows us not to be of the number of those that

“sorrow without hope:” but yet it does not require us to extirpate from our hearts that sensibility and tenderness which the Almighty has implanted within them. With the hardness of heart under the adversities of life which a false philosophy has encouraged, the religion of Christ has nothing to do; nor is it countenanced by any of the examples of the good and pious which the Scriptures furnish. Abraham was a sincere and faithful servant of God; yet when the beloved companion and sweetener of all his varied pilgrimage died in Kirjath-arba, it is stated, that “Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.” When Stephen was stoned by his cruel enemies, they were “devout men” who bore him to his burial; yet with all the chastening of grief which their new profession supplied, we are told that they “made great lamentation over him.”—We are required, in short, not to “despise the chastening of the Lord;” but to receive with indifference and apathy the trials and troubles which he sends, would argue a contempt for Him who inflicts them. To be chastened and yet not subdued, would prove the need of further correction from the hand of the Almighty,—a succession of providential trials, until we should “hear the rod and who hath appointed it.”



When, therefore, our God has smitten us,—resigned as we must ever be to His wise and merciful dispensations,—we are not required, by the terms of our blessed religion, to forbid the sighing of the heart or to check the flowing tear.—It is a weakness which may be indulged, in subservience to that faith which will not allow us to “sorrow without hope,”—in dependence, while we mourn, upon the comforts and the joys of the Gospel; and it is a weakness which, under such restrictions, the Lord Jesus Christ himself will not condemn. ‘He will remember his own tears, and he will not be offended by ours.’

I feel, my brethren, a personal consolation in adverting to this condescension to our natural weakness which the Word of God affords: that consolation is precious, as not forbidding a sorrow which the recent loss experienced by this congregation has awakened. From its influence—I am forward to avow it—upon myself, I can form some estimate of the weight of grief with which it will press upon those who must be expected to feel the deprivation most. I must not indulge here in the language of eulogy, because it is inconsistent with that sternness of truth which ought ever to be proclaimed in the house of God;

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but I am not employing the terms of unjustifiable praise—I am not using mere words of course—when I say, that the loss is one which I feel heavily and deeply, as rending asunder a tie of fervent friendship which had never been interrupted since its formation ; as removing one eminently qualified to be a counsellor to the Christian minister in the trying paths of duty through which he is called upon to proceed ; one willing, as well as able, to strengthen his hands in the arduous and often perplexing trust which has been committed to his hands.

The poor will miss in her whom we deplore, a compassionate and indefatigable friend,—one, who contributed much both of time and means to the relief of their distresses ; her own equals in society have lost an intellectual and religious companion. And if, in reverting to the example of the good and pious in every age, we call forcibly to mind these recorded expressions of the servant of the Lord,—“ We are journeying to the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you ; Come thou with us, and we will do thee good,”—they who feel an inward prompting, a more than willingness, a constraint, to accept the invitation, will remember the example afforded in the

life of her whom we lament, of a steady and consistent attendance upon the worship of God and all the ordinances of His house. Never, in any case where providential impediments were not interposed, was she known to be absent from the house of God at any of the appointed services of the sanctuary; never, in such cases, was she missed from the altar where every penitent and faithful Christian should be found meekly kneeling when that precious banquet is spread before him; never, morning or evening, on the sabbath day, or when for week-day exercises of devotion the house of God was opened, was she absent from those soul-refreshing duties, when health and strength would permit. So far, that was an example which it was refreshing to contemplate, and which it is afflicting to lose; but it was afforded, too, for our profit in the privacies of life,—in the cheerful endurance of years of enfeebling sickness,—in maintaining a Christian's equable temper under the acutest of bodily sufferings,—and in yielding to the last stroke of the destroyer in patient and complacent hope of that abiding 'rest' in the kingdom of God, which the Saviour's blood hath purchased for his faithful people.

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that perish, —if this world were all our abode,  
 and the goods of this world were all our depen-  
 dence and our hope,—if, when we lay down to  
 die, all our thoughts and expectations perished,—  
 if death annihilated both body and soul for ever,  
 —if there was to be no awakening from the sleep  
 of the grave,—then might we, upon the loss of  
 those on whom our love was centred, be gloomy,  
 and wretched, and despondent indeed. Then our  
 sorrow would be really a “sorrow without hope :”  
 parent, child, wife or brother, must then be seen  
 no more ; those eyes would never open again to  
 our tender enquiries ; that voice would have  
 ceased for ever when death snatched away the  
 struggling breath ; the sympathies of that heart  
 would respond to ours no more since death laid  
 his icy hand upon it ; that form would be hidden  
 for ever from our sight when it was committed  
 to yonder melancholy grave ! But no, my bre-  
 thren, we are taught better things in that blessed  
 Gospel which we cling to as the guide and solace  
 of life ; we are admonished there not to indulge  
 in that hopeless sorrow ; that teaches us, trying  
 and terrible as the visitation may be, to appeal  
 to death in this exulting strain, “Where is thy  
 sting ?” and to the grave, “Where is thy victory ?”  
 He who triumphed over death and the grave—our

crucified and risen Saviour—has achieved the same victory for us. At the trumpet's summons in the last and terrible day of judgment, "the sleepers of a thousand years" will start forth to "meet the Lord in the air;" those who have fallen asleep in Jesus," will rise to the life immortal. They, when that last and piercing summons shall rend the rocks of earth and the caverns of the sea, will start up from the slumber of the tomb, and unhurt by the flames of a dissolving world, will be invested with new and undecaying bodies. To their eyes the sight of the burning universe will bring no terror—the shrieks of the guilty perishing will appal not their hearts. The only sight to engage their entranced vision is the dazzling cloud on which their dear Redeemer sits enthroned,—the only sound to charm their ravished ears will be this, their Saviour's welcome, "Come, ye blessed children of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world." And then they soar away to blessedness eternal; unfading crowns enwreath their brows, and their hands are graced with golden harps; the song of redemption rises from their thankful lips in unending strain; no taint of corruption can mar the pureness of their bliss; neither decay nor change can affect the eternity of their joy.

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In this sense, and for these reasons, "bles-  
 sed are the dead;" to the true believer, to the  
 child of God, to the sincere Christian, death *is*  
 a blessing. But upon this let us pause for a mo-  
 ment. Let us not too hastily consider, far less  
 evade the enquiry, who are the dead that are  
 blessed? Who they are that shall rest from their  
 labours, when the soul is parted from its mortal  
 companion? "Blessed are the dead," says the  
 evangelist; but it becomes us strictly to mark the  
 limitation—"who die in the Lord." They must  
 live and die as believers in his name—as depen-  
 dent only on his merits for the peace of life and  
 the happiness of eternity. They only who "sleep  
 in Jesus" shall awake to glory; they only who  
 have an interest, "a part and lot," in Christ's  
 atoning blood, shall escape the condemnation to  
 "outward darkness and unquenchable fire."—  
 To the thoughtless, the irreligious, the profane,  
 the scoffer; to the worldly-minded, the unbelie-  
 ver, the hypocrite, death will be but "the begin-  
 ning of sorrows."

God grant, my brethren, that these awful truths  
 may not be without their suitable impressions!  
 To some before me, this frequent appeal to life's  
 uncertainty, and to all the eloquent lessons it

brings home to our hearts, the frequent choice of this mournful theme, may possibly prove wearisome. Would God that there was no need of reverting to them so often! Would that the painful evidences of our mortality were fewer and less afflictive; and that men were more readily and deeply impressed by the warning lessons of calamity and death! That you may be persuaded that "the time is short," and, in that conviction, be prepared for the awful period when "time shall be no more"—that you may find death a blessing and not a curse,—eternity a scene of boundless joy and not of wretchedness interminable,—this is the object of all our preaching and of all your hearing. Our bibles are not furnished to us—our houses of prayer are not built—our public devotions are not appointed—Christ's ministers are not commissioned, merely to entertain you with abstract, unfelt, and unprofitable subjects. The main design and intention of all these is to render you better and happier in this world; and when you come to die, as must soon be the case, that you may die in peace and hope.

Is it not, therefore, important,—yes, absolutely necessary that you should be reminded continually of the approach of death and all its mo-

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mentous consequences? For in anticipation of that change which awaits us all, would not this be the feeling and the prayer of every one who hears me, "Let me die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like his!" But O, what can avail the mere inward expression of that prayer, unless through the power of Christ, by faith in his Name, and obedience to his Gospel, you are *living the life of the righteous*, and giving testimony that you are "new creatures in Christ." Spare yourselves, I beseech you, the dreadful disappointment, the unspeakable agony of discovering—when the discovery will be too late—that you have deceived yourselves by hopes to which the Gospel gives no countenance! And that you may be spared this misery, let Christ be your life that death may be your gain!

Alas! it is melancholy to reflect upon the numbers who "care not for these things"—who slight every duty of their holy profession, and who move carelessly onwards to the grave without a thought upon the dreary eternity beyond. What a gloomy register of the inconsiderate, the irreligious, and the unprofitable, does every community offer! Not even, perhaps, the book of God in their houses; and where it is, never opened to



view his threatenings and his promises? Not a prayer there, perhaps, to be heard,—no father's voice imploring the Divine protection upon his assembled household—no infant tongue taught to utter God's holy name in reverence? All, all is a dismal solitude there; the whole moral soil is overgrown with weeds; the "good fruit" is searched for in vain.

What are their only thoughts, their only occupations? The world, the world, and all its perplexing, changeful, short-lived joys;—religion is a thing unthought of, unspoken of, unpractised! Early and late, business or pleasure finds them ardent devotees;—not a prayer, not a thought, not an hour can be spared for God. Alas! even his own holy day is grudged and denied to him. The usual engagements of the world, toil and trouble and anxiety, disturb those hours of sacred repose; and the Lord's house opens its portals and invites them to its sanctuary in vain!

But I will not fill up the melancholy picture, which is dreary enough in its outline; let the consciences of those who hear me, supply the rest. Alas! my brethren, this is not the way to journey "pleasantly and peacefully" through the wil-

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derness of this world; it is not the way to gain at last the rest of the heavenly Canaan. And do any of you feel doubt, and mistrust, and alarm as to the road you are really pursuing? Do you feel discontent with your condition? Do you feel that your state is not a safe one? Fly, then, I beseech you, to the Saviour of the world—fly to the "everlasting arms" which are open to receive you—fly to the cross of Jesus, and through his most precious blood, plead with the prayer of faith for admission into his heavenly kingdom. Coming to the Father of mercies with that appeal, you will not be rejected—he will accept you, he will welcome you. But do not delay your approach; for even to-day he is pleading with the sinner to "come unto him and be saved;" he tells us to-day, as he tells us always, "the time is short,"—"now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation."

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