

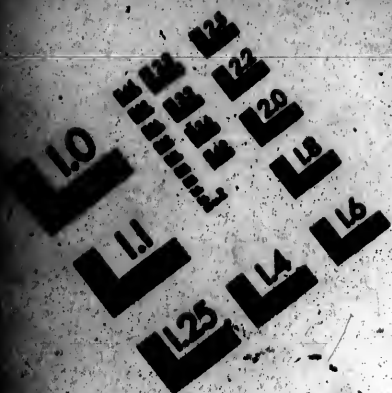


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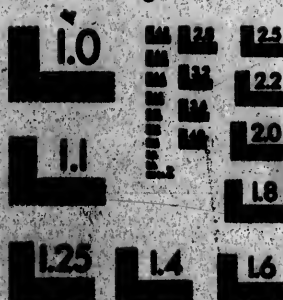
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THE
RELIGIOUS IMPROVEMENT OF SICKNESS;
A SERMON,

ADDRESSED TO
INVALIDS AND THEIR FRIENDS;
VISITING TORQUAY.

Lev. xii. 5, 6,—“ My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him :—

For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth, every one whom He receiveth.”—

Heb. v. 11.—“ Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous ; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”

YORK :
RE-PRINTED BY DESIRE,
BY ROBERT STANTON.

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1833.

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The following Sermon, as will be seen from the prefatory remarks of the Author, (who now rests from his labours, where his works do follow him) was composed for a particular purpose, and circulated among a congregation, whose local circumstances would naturally add to it a peculiar interest. This local interest must of course be lost to readers in any other situation : but it is believed, that the familiar and earnest manner in which the subject itself is treated in the following pages, is calculated to excite in any place, some, at least, to a more serious and Christian consideration of the design of sickness, and to lead them to inquire how far they have co-operated with or frustrated the mercy of God, when He has visited with sickness, either themselves or their friends.

The following Sermon was preached at Torquay, between two and three years ago ;—and it was suggested to me at the time, that its end could not be answered, except to a very small extent, unless it were printed for circulation among the families who bring their invalids to this place. Not thinking it important enough to be made so public, I did not venture to act upon that suggestion, although I could not but acknowledge the truth of it. However, I endeavoured to effect the same purpose, by lending the Sermon occasionally where I thought it might be useful. But this being on many accounts an inconvenient and unsatisfactory method of proceeding, I have at length determined on executing what was so long since recommended. I should wish it to be understood, that one great object which I have in view is, to introduce myself to the sick person, whom I may be called upon to visit, and to pave the way for conversation ; so that he may know before-hand a little of what my feelings and opinions are, and what I should desire his to be. At the same time I am not without hopes that other persons, with whom I may never become acquainted, may derive some hints as to the mode of turning their sickness to the best account from the perusal of the following pages. I pray God to bless this little attempt to render more effectual one important part of my ministerial duties.

J. Y.

Tor, September 17th, 1829.

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SERMON.



2 CORINTHIANS, IV. 17, 18.

"Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;—

"While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

SAINT PAUL is in these words speaking especially of the sufferings and persecutions, which he himself endured in the cause of the Gospel; but the observation may justly be applied, as it commonly is, to affliction in general; and on the present occasion, I shall limit it to one particular kind, viz. that of sickness:—for of this it is no less true than of any other, that it is comparatively of momentary endurance, and that if by it we are instructed to disregard the transitory things which are seen, and to fix the eye of faith upon the things which are not seen, it will by God's blessing become the instrument of "working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

All being liable to sickness, and all perhaps having had some experience of it either in their own persons or in their families, the purpose for which it is sent, and the benefit to be derived from it, are subjects fit to be treated of at all times and in every pulpit; but they are peculiarly suitable for our meditations at this time and in this place: this our Hospital, which at this season* of the year is filled with patients seeking health in the medicinal virtues of a milder climate, is a school which abounds

* The Winter.

in practical lessons of mortality; and I would not that such instruction should be lost either upon those who themselves afford it, or upon those before whose eyes it is exhibited.

Visiting the sick is one of the most important, one of the most difficult, often one of the most painful, sometimes (thank God!) one of the most pleasant, duties which a minister of religion has to perform—it is important, because it may be the only opportunity which the sick person has remaining to make his peace with God, and to accept the gracious invitations of the Gospel before he goes hence and is no more seen, and the only one which the minister has of being instrumental to the salvation of a fellow-creature: it is difficult, because there is such a danger of being deceived as to the real state of the sufferer's mind, and therefore of administering false comfort and applying remedies which the case does not require; this I select as the chief among many difficulties: it is painful, when there appears no disposition to make a religious improvement of the solemn warning which God has sent: but it is pleasant, when a pious and filial resignation to God's will is seen to overcome the bitterness of bodily anguish, and a well-grounded Christian hope of future happiness to support the drooping spirits, and to cheer and illuminate the otherwise dismal and dark hours of sickness and of death.

Being, I trust, in some measure aware of the great importance of this duty, and having, I am sure, a lively sense of its great difficulty, I wish to take one of the opportunities, which the public exercise of my ministry affords, for stating explicitly to you all thus assembled together, my sentiments on this subject; for I am conscious that in private I fall very far short of doing what I ought and wish to do, and of expressing what I really feel, in this respect; I am speaking now chiefly with reference to the higher classes, and of those more especially the

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strangers, who compose this congregation ; in visiting the poor, the difficulty which I have mentioned, is not experienced in an equal degree ; there is generally some previous knowledge of the character of the patient, there is a readier access to their houses, there is less of reserve on both sides, the minister can speak his sentiments more boldly :—but when the person to be visited is of a higher class and a stranger also, the duty is not so easily fulfilled ; ignorance of the case sometimes renders it difficult to know what remedy to apply ; diffidence shackles the freedom of thought and checks the fluency of words ; the presence of several strangers increases the embarrassment ; mutual reserve makes both the minister and the patient averse from expressing their sentiments to each other with the plainness and openness with which they ought to converse under circumstances, which more than any other require, that all disguise should be banished from the intercourse between man and man ; and too often even the laws of civility operate in creating an improper reluctance to give pain or offence—you must forgive me for speaking of myself and of my own feelings on this occasion, (for I am indeed speaking of myself and of my own experience only, I do not mean to imply that ministers in general have to complain of the same hindrances), and in charity ascribe my doing so to a right motive ;—as your minister for the time, I wish you to know what my sentiments are, and these sentiments I feel that I can more confidently and fully express in this public way, and in a premeditated discourse, than I often find myself capable of doing at a private interview and in occasional conversations. There are infirmities, which some minds never overcome ; I do not say this by way of a vain apology for the defective performance of any duty ; it ought to be otherwise ;—it probably might be otherwise ; a greater degree of faith, and a more perfect conviction of the solemn importance of the duty which he has to execute, would lessen to the Minister

the difficulties which he experiences ;—but since these difficulties do exist and are felt in my own case, I am desirous by this method to supply the omissions, with which I am conscious that I am often chargeable in my personal intercourse with individuals.

The first observation then that I have to make is addressed to the *friends* of the sick person :—when you yourselves are aware of the patient's danger, I think it is a serious mistake to conceal the fact from his knowledge.* I know this is done in kindness ; it would be cruel, you think, to add to his distress by depriving him of the hope of recovery ; it would be painful to yourselves to inflict such a wound upon one whom you love : but if the soul is more precious than the body, and if eternal peace and happiness are to be preferred to the momentary comfort of a delusive hope of life, there can be no doubt

* It should be observed here that I am alluding chiefly to persons afflicted with that particular disease, for which invalids seek the remedy of our milder climate ;—this is so flattering a disorder, so generally fatal, yet one which so commonly encourages its victim to indulge in sanguine expectations of recovery, that it seems peculiarly deplorable in such cases to disclose to the patient the truth of his situation ;—especially since there is in general a considerable space of time allowed, which may be profitably employed upon the concerns of the soul without any fear of aggravating the sufferings of the body.—There are other diseases certainly of a violent nature, the termination of which is not so usually fatal, and the cure of which might be not only retarded, but sometimes even prevented altogether, by any cause producing agitation of mind ; in such cases it might be highly imprudent to inform the patient of his danger, at the same time that no benefit could be expected to result from it, the state of the body rendering the mind quite incompetent to engage in any regular and deliberate meditations. But if any sickness is to be improved to religious ends, I know of none that affords more advantages for this purpose, than that lingering disease of which I have spoken, affording as it does in general so much time, and often leaving the mind all its powers of thought and reflection unimpaired.

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that it is both your duty and also the best expression of your affection, to inform him that it is time to "set his house in order," and to prepare for his approaching end. If he is already in a Christian state of watchfulness and preparation, the intelligence will be no great shock to his feelings, nor cause any serious discomposure of mind; and he will thank you for it, because he would wish in his few remaining days (if he were sure that he had but a few days remaining) to dismiss from his mind all those earthly thoughts and cares, which the expectation of returning to the world might foster there, and to devote himself more exclusively to the welfare of his soul, whose fate is so soon to be decided, to communing with God, whom he is so soon to meet, and to meditation on that eternal world, into which he is shortly about to enter. If he has made no preparation for death, if you are aware that he has hitherto lived a thoughtless and careless life, without any serious impressions of religion, and that he is still contemplating nothing but a return to the pleasures and pursuits of the world, it is in that unhappy case still more incumbent upon you to inform him of his true condition, that he may embrace the only opportunity now left him of attending to that most important of all subjects, which he has so sadly neglected, the salvation of his imperishable soul. The news may disturb him greatly at first; he may shrink back with horror from the near prospect of death; he may be alarmed and agitated, as he ought to be, at being told that he is soon to experience that awful change, on which he has never reflected, and to enter into that world, for his reception in which he has made no provision: but what a folly, what a cruelty, what a sin, for the mere sake of keeping his mind in a state of fictitious tranquillity, to delude him on by the flattery of a deceitful hope, until his body drops into the grave, in which "there is no repentance," and his soul goes to appear as a stranger and an enemy before the presence of his "unknown

God!" Of whose hands will that wretched man's blood be required? Verily, his own misjudging friends are, in part, at least, guilty of it. How severely will they condemn themselves, when, having once suffered the opportunity of doing him the greatest good to slip out of their hands, they shall afterwards be tortured by the reflection, that but for their mistaken kindness, his soul might have been saved!

But suppose it is not so certain that the patient's sickness is unto death, suppose there is good reason to hope (according to human calculations of probability) that he will be restored to health; what is to be done in this case? Is all allusion to death carefully to be avoided, lest he should be needlessly alarmed and think his disorder more dangerous than it is? Is the subject of religion to be industriously kept out of view, lest the sound of her voice should ring in his ears like a funeral-knell? Is the presence of a minister to be prohibited, lest the sight of him should make the same impression as that of an undertaker? Is the Bible to be concealed, lest it should convey to his feeble mind the same terrifying intimations as a coffin or a shroud? For shame! for shame!—These are unchristian fears and precautions; rather take every advantage of a season, when the mind is more disposed to solemn and serious reflection, and more likely to receive deep impressions of religion; sow the seed, when the Providence of God has kindly prepared the ground for its reception and nourishment.

Were I to converse with one in this state, I should wish to address him somewhat after the following manner:—

"Do not imagine, my friend, that I am come to you as the messenger of death; though you are in sickness and myself in health, God only knows which of us may die first: I come to you as a friend to talk with you on subjects of equal interest to us both, and equally necessary to be considered at all times

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and in all conditions, in youth as well as in age, in strength as well as in weakness. It is true, God has sent you a *warning* of your mortality; and therefore you seem to have a more special and immediate call to reflection; and you have great reason to be thankful for it, if it has put thoughts into your mind which you never before entertained, and which (if you had enjoyed uniform and uninterrupted health) the distractions of earthly business and the seductions of wordly pleasure, might still have excluded. This is the great blessing of your sickness, that whereas you might otherwise have been so wholly occupied with temporal concerns and enjoyments as to allow yourself no time for quiet meditation, God has now mercifully provided this leisure for you; He has forced it upon you so that you cannot refuse it; He has for a time suspended your engagements in life, and deprived you of those pleasures in which you used to indulge; be assured He has done it in kindness; for "He loveth those whom He corrects, even as a Father the son in whom he delighteth;" "He doth not willingly grieve or afflict the children of men, but chastiseth us for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness"—make use therefore of the leisure thus graciously given you, for the purpose for which he has given it to you; make the use of it which he intends you should, by considering your mortality, the end for which you were born, the part you have to sustain in life, the prospect that lies before you in another world.—I repeat that I have no wish to terrify you by representing your disease as certainly mortal; it may be so, or it may not be so; the importance of the subjects on which I wish to converse with you does not depend on either of these alternatives; I am going to say what highly concerns you indeed at this present moment, but what would equally concern you if you were in the vigour of health. For though you should not die of this sickness, yet die you must at last of some sickness or

of some accident; perhaps with previous notice, perhaps quite suddenly and unexpectedly; at all events you must die, and to die happily and safely, you must be in a christian state of preparation for death, whenever it may come and by whatever means. I would wish you to consider that you may die this very day; I would wish you and myself and all persons to consider this even in the best state of health; I would wish you to live in such a constant expectation of death, as to entertain an habitual feeling of the insecurity of life. But this is what the world in general do not consider, while their health is unimpaired, and the bustle and activity and gaiety of life occupy and distract their minds; they think that they shall live for ever, or rather they do not think on such a subject at all; they have other things to attend to: this perhaps was your own state formerly; how thankful therefore you ought to be for God's mercy in awakening you from that dangerous security, and in convincing you by your present infirmity that your life hangs by a thread, that you must quit this world soon, and that you may be summoned out of it at a very unforeseen time, and in a very unexpected manner! I can most truly say that you are to be congratulated on your sickness, if it has produced such thoughts; as with equal truth I say that I think those are much to be pitied, whose continual health is one cause of their thoughtlessness about death, and of their consequent indifference to religion; I doubt not that multitudes owe their salvation to the Fatherly kindness of God in afflicting them with sickness; in the school of suffering they first learnt the vanity of the world, were first effectually convinced of the certainty of death, were first instructed in the value of their souls, first perceived their need of mercy, were first comforted with a cheering view of the gracious Redeemer who died for them, first animated by a solid and well-grounded hope of eternal happiness. I have heard many in their sick-

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ness declare that until that time they had never seriously attended to religion; I have heard them express their gratitude to God for bringing them to Him even by the severest sufferings; I have heard them protest (without doubting their sincerity) that they would rather continue in that afflicted state all their lives, than recover their health, if with its return they were to lose the spiritual advantages which they had now acquired and to relapse into their former evil habits and dispositions; I have known them pray fervently for death rather than such an unhappy recovery should take place.—Then is not sickness a blessing?—Is not every thing a blessing, however severe the trial, and however difficult the acknowledgment to flesh and blood, which may wean from the world a person, who has hitherto set his affection on earthly things, and be in God's hands instrumental to the final salvation of his soul?"

Having, by some such remarks as these, endeavoured to convince the patient of the benefit of sickness, and to dispose him to be thankful for it, as being a merciful opportunity of religious improvement, I should then wish earnestly to exhort him to make that use of it; I should wish to continue my address to him after this manner:—

"Now remember, you are most solemnly called to reflection; this *may* be your last sickness; if it should, you have but a short time to prepare for death; if it should not, no time is too long for that purpose, and should you neglect this express warning, you may never receive another, and it is not very probable, that in health you will attend to this important subject, if even in sickness it makes no impression upon you—consider, it is an awful thing to die, a very awful thing to appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, to give a strict account of your whole life; God has granted you a peep into the grave, in which you must one day, perhaps ere long, be laid; he has partly drawn aside the curtain, which separates this world from

the next, and favoured you with a slight glimpse of the regions that lie beyond it; beware that you do not neglect the disclosure thus made to you; but look steadfastly into that opening grave, and contemplate attentively the scenes which you are permitted to behold behind that curtain, and learn the use and purpose of your present life, from its end and consequences—reflect for what was it that you were born?—you had not thought much about this before; but you see clearly now that it was not merely to enjoy the pleasures of life; for you are not capable of them at present, and may perhaps never experience them again; or, if you should, you must be aware that there is no dependence to be placed on them, for they may be taken away a second time as easily as they have now been. Nor can you think that you were born for immortality upon earth; indeed you never really entertained such an extravagant thought as that; but you did what is practically as bad, you lived without having a serious sense of the contrary, without solemnly contemplating the certainty and importance of *death*. For such thoughtlessness you have now no longer any excuse; for death's messenger and forerunner has visited you; he has given you notice; he has called to you to prepare; and death himself is not very far behind; you have been informed of his approach, and can no longer plead ignorance or the want of a warning, though hereafter he should come upon you by surprise, and lay you low by the first touch of his withering hand.

What then are you to do? I am considering myself still in conversation with the sick person, and in answer to this question what he is to do, now that he has come to a conviction of his mortality, and of the great importance of that fact, I should wish to give him in continuation the following advice:

“Consider seriously what has been the nature of your whole past life; I do not want you to confess your sins to me or to any other human being; but confess them to yourself and to

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God: God is acquainted with them; Him therefore you cannot deceive; try to undeceive yourself; examine your own heart strictly and impartially; exercise your memory to the utmost; call before you all the periods and scenes of your former days; the record against you, however old its date, is not blotted out until you shall have come to repentance and faith in Christ; think of your youth, think of your riper years; remember the advantages you have had, the talents you have abused, the opportunities you have missed; recollect as well as you can your omissions of duty, your positive commissions of sin; think how little you have lived to God, how much you have been devoted to the world, how little you have studied the welfare of your soul, how much you have been addicted to the pleasures of sense, the gratification of the body, the follies and vanities and vices of life; consider how light you have made of the Gospel, how ignorant you have been of your corrupt nature, how unconscious of your need of a Saviour, how insensible of having required the purifying and strengthening influence of the Holy Spirit, how formal in your religion, how void of the love of God, how unfruitful in the virtues and graces of Christianity, self-denial, temperance, charity, humility, chastity, active beneficence; study the Scriptures now, and compare your past life and general disposition and frame of mind with what they require as necessary to salvation; think of all these things; probe your conscience to the very bottom; do not seek for excuses; do not flatter yourself by putting a favourable construction upon your past life; do not say, I have been exposed to such and such temptations, I have lived in such and such society, I have wanted such and such advantages, and therefore I have a good apology for my sins, my negligences and my ignorances; but rather make your case as bad as you can; you will not easily err or exaggerate in this; the great fear is lest you should think too well of

yourself; there is the grand failing of us all; we never think too ill of ourselves; nor could we, though with Job we should "abhor ourselves and repent in dust and ashes," or with David and the Publican, we should not dare to lift up our eyes unto Heaven—(Psalm xl, 15; St. Luke xviii. 13). We are too apt to say we have done no harm, we have led respectable lives, we entertain no ill-will towards a fellow-creature; it is the fallacious comfort, (believe one who has frequently witnessed the fact) which persons, who have no true sense of religion, generally administer to themselves; it is too often the only ground of their hope, even on a death-bed; vain hope! Therefore I warn you against it, because it is so common and so natural a refuge for those, who are in need of consolation and peace of mind, and look to themselves for comfort, instead of looking to Christ:—but with that view they must necessarily either overlook their sins, or apologize for them, and must put down imaginary virtues and good qualities to their credit; but this is so false and delusive, so anti-christian a species of comfort, it is so at variance with the whole tenor of the Gospel, it will so little stand the test of God's judgment, or even of the judgment of conscience itself when duly enlightened, that I cannot too earnestly warn you against ever having recourse to it; the Gospel holds a different language; it says, banish all self-confidence, and found your only hope on "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." These are the points on which I should wish you to examine yourself; are you thoroughly convinced of your sinfulness?—Have you a lively faith in the efficacy of our blessed Saviour's satisfaction for sin?—And have you the testimony of that repentance and faith in purity of heart and holiness of life?—Are you contrite and humble from a sense of your unworthiness, grateful for the unspeakable mercy of Redemption, and earnest in prayer, through a conviction of your natural infirmities, for the aid of

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the Holy Spirit to enable you to cherish all the affections and to bring forth all the fruits of a pious and devout mind?—Question yourself minutely and frequently on these important subjects; and if, by the gracious assistance of God, (for which I trust you will incessantly and fervently pray) this religious character shall be formed in you, then the sickness, by which you were first called to serious reflection, will indeed have been the greatest of all blessings, and you will ever rejoice in the recollection of that “tribulation,” through which by God’s mercy in Jesus Christ, you “entered into the Kingdom of Heaven.”

This is the outline of the address (in its most material points) which I would wish to make to a patient on my first ministerial visit to him; of course the same and other topics would continually furnish matter for subsequent conversations; but I must content myself with having shewn you how I should desire to commence. And now I will ask the sick, and the friends of the sick, whether death is really an evil, when it is anticipated and met with a truly religious preparation? Since it must come at some time, is it any great matter when it comes, if the person is ripe for Heaven, and can leave the world with a comfortable assurance of God’s mercy through Christ, and of a joyful resurrection to eternal life? Surely, to the individual, the sooner the troubles and dangers and trials of life are safely concluded, the better; as long as it pleases God to continue us here, we have our work to do, and that work we must, through his help, endeavour to execute with active zeal and persevering industry and cheerful submission, “as unto the Lord;” it is the only purpose for which we live; for “we are not our own, we are bought with a price,” therefore we must have no object more at heart than to “glorify God in our body and in our spirit, which are God’s:”—but does not God see-

cifully deal with that person, of whom He requires but a short period of probation, if in that time the great end, "even the salvation of his soul," has been secured? We cannot as Christians think otherwise; we must, as Christians, regard this life simply as the way to Heaven, and the sooner Heaven (or Paradise, the outer Court of Heaven—St. Luke, xxiii. 43) is reached, the happier for that joyful Pilgrim who arrives there. Then is not this consideration the surest remedy against the fear of death, and the truest consolation to the mourners, who survive a Christian friend? Friends cannot but grieve for the loss of one whom they love; but they need not, they must not, "sorrow as others, which have no hope, for them that sleep in Christ;" they would not grieve if they could behold the object of their affection where he is, nor would they wish to recall the happy spirit, that has mounted to the bosom of God, back to the sorrows and anxieties of earth.

Viewed by the eye of faith, what a happy event is the death of a Christian! Many of you, no doubt, have had opportunities of witnessing how effectual is the consolation of the Gospel in dispelling the fears with which frail human nature would otherwise encounter the last enemy; insomuch that, while the way of the world is merely to flatter the sufferer with the promise of returning health, and most carefully to conceal from him the knowledge of his danger, and industriously to exclude from his mind all thoughts of death, as if they would persuade him that he was not an inheritor of the common lot of humanity, while they would divert his attention from his perilous condition, by indifferent conversation and trifling books and idle amusements, for the express purpose of banishing all solemn and serious reflection, the Christian on the contrary is encouraged to seek his comfort in those very considerations which the prospect of death begets; and he finds the comfort which he seeks:—he is supported, through the influence of the

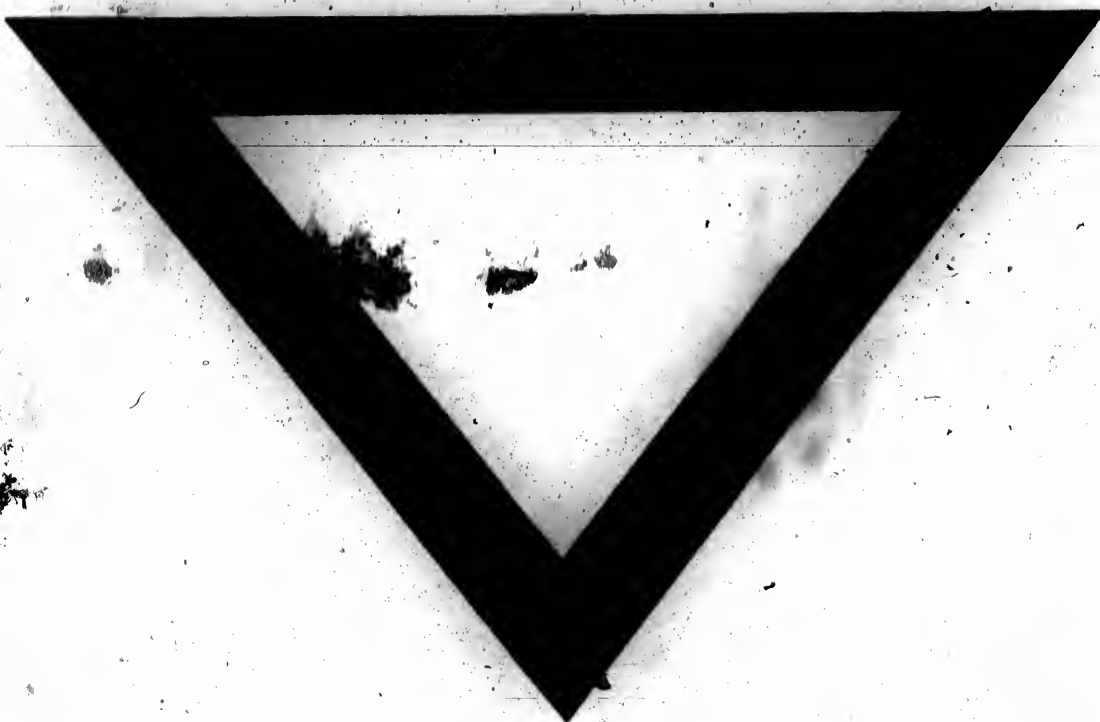
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Spirit, by a firm trust in the goodness of God, by child-like resignation to His fatherly correction, by lively faith in the promises and atonement of Christ, by a contempt for worldly pleasures, by the exercise of spiritual affections and prayer, by reading and meditating on the word of God, by the persuasion that death is a merciful deliverance from "the miseries of this sinful world," and by joyful anticipations of the rest and happiness of Heaven. These are the arms with which he meets his foe; he does not avert his face and suffer the final blow to come unperceived, as if death could be avoided or delayed, or rendered more harmless by not being contemplated; but he fixes a bold and fearless look on him as he advances, and though he falls beneath his stroke, he is not conquered, but triumphs in his very fall, and in his case is "brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." Indeed how often have by-standers witnessed, at the departure of a true Christian, that the Victory is gained even before death has actually taken possession of the body, which is his only prey!—how often have they witnessed peace and joy and hope increasing up to the very moment of dissolution, until at last the happy spirit seems almost to be entered into Paradise before it has actually quitted its tenement of mortal clay!—how often has the justice of that beautiful illustration been remarked, by which *hope* in death is compared to the spark of an expiring taper, which emits its brightest ray at the moment of its extinction!

The greater part of us, my brethren, it seems probable upon a view of the ordinary dealings of God's Providence, will have an intimation of our approaching end by the progress of some disease; may we be so supported under it, that, in all our pain and weakness of body, our souls may be encouraged and comforted by Christian hope!—May we not be found in that unhappy state, that injudicious friends shall think

it expedient to conceal from us the advances of death, or that some more pious Christian shall feel it necessary to alarm and agitate our minds by a representation of our sin and danger of eternal ruin at time when our bodily "infirmities" alone, without a "wounded spirit," will be almost as much as we shall be able to bear, and we shall rather be in need of all the consolation that can be administered! But may we have made so wise a preparation before hand, that we shall be able to meet death with joy rather than with fear, and as a friend rather than as an enemy! And may the ministering Angels, who preside over us, gently release our departing spirits, and bear them into the presence of God, purified from every spot and stain of sin by the blood of the Lamb, and fitted to be "for ever with the Lord" in the holy and happy regions of eternal bliss!—or, if God, in his wisdom and mercy, shall see fit to summon us without a moment's warning from the world, may we, through His grace, be found watching when that call shall come, with "oil in our lamps and our loins girded, and we ourselves like unto servants who wait for their Lord's coming!" May we ever be kept, by the power of the Holy Ghost, from the awful condition of those wretched beings, whose "hearts are overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and cares of this world, and so that hour comes upon them unawares!"—But may we be always ready at what hour soever the messenger of God may arrive, and like old Simeon depart in peace to enjoy the fulness of that salvation which we have long waited for and earnestly desired! Grant this, O merciful Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our only Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.

Note.—I should strongly advise every patient to make frequent use in private of the office for the visitation of the sick. Let him not omit to meditate on the exhortation, nor to attend to the matters spoken of in the Rubric immediately following the Creed.



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