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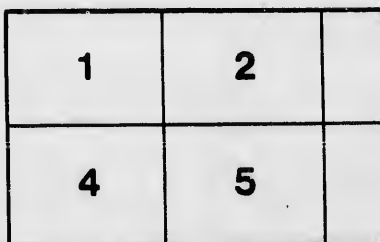
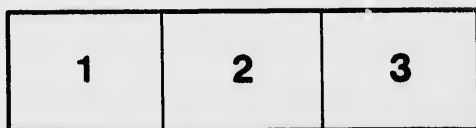
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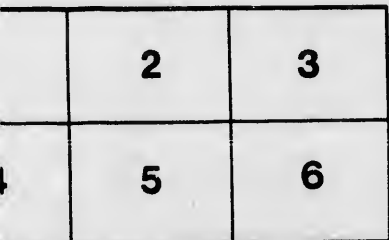
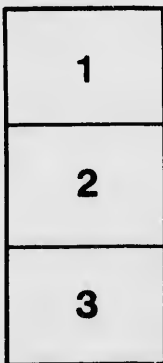
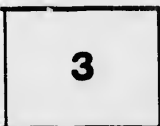
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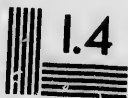
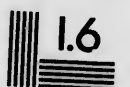
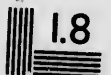
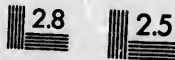
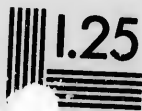
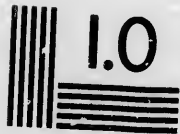
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Susannah A. Hawkins

FRIENDLY VISIT

TO THE

HOUSE OF MOURNING.

Richard Cecil

IN THE DAY OF ADVERSITY CONSIDER.

Eccl. vii. 14.

Many are the sayings of the wife,
In ancient and in modern books enroll'd,
Extolling Patience—
But to th' afflicted in his pangs their sound
Little prevails; or rather seems a tune
Harsh, and of dissonant mood from his complaint,
Unless he feel within
Some source of consolation from above;
Secret refreshings that repair his strength,
And fainting spirits uphold.

MILTON.

NEW BRUNSWICK:

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FRIENDLY VISIT, &c.



YOUR present affliction, my dear friend, demands something more than the usual forms of condolence. Sorrow, which like yours, cannot be prevented, may yet be alleviated and improved. This is my design in addressing you, and if I seem to intrude upon your retirement, let my motive be my apology. Having felt how much better it is to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting; * having received my best lessons, companions, and even comforts, in it; I would administer from my little stock of experience: and while I thus endeavour to assist your meditations, shall rejoice if I may contribute, though but a mite, to your comfort.

* Eccl. vii. 2.

Were I, indeed, acquainted with the peculiar circumstances of your loss, I should; employ particular considerations: but my present address can have only a general aim; which is to acquaint the heart, at a favorable moment, with its grand concerns; to give it a serious impression when softened; and an heavenly direction when moved. Let us, therefore, sit down humbly together in this house of mourning: If the heart of the wise be found* here, your experience, I hope, will prove that here also it is formed: and let us calmly contemplate some momentous objects intimately connected with it, and viewed with peculiar advantage from it.

OUR GOD is the first of these objects: with him we seldom form any close acquaintance till we meet him in trouble. He commands silence now, that He may be heard; and removes intervening objects, that He may be seen. A SOVEREIGN DISPOSER appears, who, as Lord of all, hath only

* Eccl. vii. 4.

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Hab. ii.

resumed what he lent ; whose will is the law of his creatures ; and who expressly declares his will in the present affliction. We should seriously consider, that all allowed repugnance to the determinations of his government (however made known to us) is sin ; and that every wish to alter the appointments of his wisdom is folly : we know not what we ask. When GOD discovers himself in any matter, those who know him, will keep silence before him.* Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him ? How just was the reply ; *' Behold I am vile ! what shall I answer thee ? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. †*

This silent submission under trying dispensations, is variously exemplified as well as inculcated in the scriptures. An awful instance of sin and sorrow occurs in the family of Aaron : his sons disregarded a divine appointment, and there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them ; but Aaron held his peace. †

A 2

Hab. ii. 20.

† Job xl. ii. 4. † Lev. x. 2. 3.

Eli, in similar circumstances, silenced his heart with this single but sufficient consideration, "*It is the Lord.*"* David, under a stroke which he declares consumed him, observes, "*I was dumb, I opened not my mouth because THOU didst it.*"† And Job, when stript of every comfort, blessed the name of Him who took away, as well as gave.‡ Whatever be the nature of your calamity, may it be attended with such an humble and child-like spirit as these possessed!

But the Sovereign Disposer is also the COMPASSIONATE FATHER. Among other instances of his tenderness, you may have observed the peculiar supports he affords under peculiar trials. Let us mark, and acknowledge, the hand which mingles mercy with judgment, and alleviation with distress. The parents I have just mentioned lost their children under circumstances far more distressing than yours:—The desire of your eyes (if not the idol of your heart) was, perhaps, almost a stranger :) you

* 1 Sam. iii. 18. † Psal. xxxix. 9. ‡ Job. i. 21.

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strove hard to detain it, but He, who took the young children into his arms and blessed them, took yours; and, taking it, seemed to say, What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter; *—patiently suffer this little one to come unto me, for of such is my kingdom† composed:—Verily I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father. †
 “If I take away your child, I take it to myself—Is not this infinitely beyond any thing you could do for it? Could you say to it, if it had lived, ‘Thou shalt weep no more,—the days of thy mourning are ended?’ || Could you shew it any thing in this world like the glory of God, and of the Lamb? § Could you raise it to any honour here like receiving a crown of life?” ¶

The voice of a Father of mercies and a God of all comfort** speaks as distinctly in the death as in the birth of an in-

* John xiii. 7.

† Matt. x. 14.

‡ Matt. xviii. 10.

|| Isa. xxx. 19.

§ Rev. xxii. 23. ¶ James i. 12. ** 2 Cor. i. 3.

fant. A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentations and bitter weeping; Rachel, weeping for her children, refused to be comforted, because they were not. Thus saith the Lord, *'Refrain thy voice from weeping and thine eyes from tears, for there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border.** It is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones should perish.†

Is it a pious Friend that has just yielded up his breath? The same voice seems to say, *'Turn from him, or rather turn from his clay—his faded garment.—He himself is taken from the evil to come;—He is entered into peace.†*

When the able minister, the exemplary parent, or the faithful partner depart, a consternation often seizes the circles which they blessed. We are so stunned by the sudden blow, or occupied with the distressing circumstances, that we scarcely can hear God saying, *'Fear not, I, even I, am he that comforteth*

* Jer. xv. 17. † Matt. xviii. 14. † Isa. lvii. 12.

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you :* I, your Father, am yet alive ; I gave you your departed friend ; I sent every benefit which was conveyed thro' him ; trust me for blessings yet in store ; trust me with him, and with yourselves.'

Whatever notions one who lives without God in the world may form of dying, We should learn from his word to regard it merely as a translation,—a change in which nothing is lost which is really valuable. As surely as we believe that Jesus died and rose again, so surely do we believe that them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him.† Taught of God, we should view losses, sickness, pain, and death, but as the several trying stages by which a good man, like Joseph, is conducted from a tent to a court. Sin his disorder ; Christ his physician ; Pain his medicine ; the Bible his support ; the Grave his bed ; and Death himself an Angel, expressly sent to release the worn-out Labourer, or crown the faithful Soldier. I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, blessed

* Isa. li, 12. † 1 Thess. iv. 14.

are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth : Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours ; and their works follow them.*

But admitting the state of your departed Friend to be doubtful, yet in all cases that are really so, let us cultivate honourable thoughts of God ; let us remember the FAITHFUL CREATOR. Righteousness is his throne though clouds surround it. Whatever he hath left obscure we may safely leave him to explain. Let us recollect that, amidst innumerable obscurities, he hath made things clear in proportion as they are important ; and therefore repeatedly urges it upon our conscience, that the door is still open to us ;—that it is awful to stand before it unresolved ;—that we must trust him to-day ;—and that to-morrow he will equally remove our conjectures and our complaints.

Perhaps you are ready to reply, *‘ I have heard many such things : and I also could speak as you do, if your soul were*

* Rev. xiv. 13.

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 bruise is incurable; and thy wound griev-
 ous ;—thou hast no healing medicines.*" †

Beware, however, of falling into their
 sin who limited the Holy One of Israel. †
 There is a charge continually brought
 against man, that in his trouble, the
 Source and the Resource are equally
 forgotten. Though affliction cometh
 not forth of the dust, ||—yet none saith,
 Where is God my Maker, who giveth
 Songs in the night? § Endeavour then,
 in extremities, to recollect an ALL-SUF-
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 HELP in trouble. HE at least may add
 (as he does in the passage just alluded
 to) '*I will restore health unto thee, and I
 will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the
 Lord.*' Cannot the voice which rebuk-
 ed a tempestuous sea calm our troubled
 spirits? Is his hand shortened at all,
 that he cannot bless our latter end, like

* Job xvi. 2, 4.

† Jer. xxx. 12, 13.

‡ Psu. lxxviii. 41. || Job v. 6. § Job xxxv. 10.

Job's, more than the beginning? * Is it not the Lord that maketh poor, and maketh rich; that bringeth low and lifteth up? † Many, whose hearts have been desolate like yours, while they have looked around, have at length looked UPWARD unto Him and been lightened. ‡ A single promise has afforded them not only relief, but strong consolation.

Let us therefore, my dear friend, turn again to this strong hold as prisoners of hope: even to-day can He render double to us. || Let us look to Abraham's God, and his encouragement is ours; *Fear not,—I am God Almighty* §—*q. d.* I am all-sufficient in all cases: I am enough; and able to do exceeding abundantly above all that you ask or think. ¶ I have taken away thy Gourd, but dost thou well to be angry?—have I left nothing for thankfulness?—this world however cannot be your home, nor its objects your consolation: they are all too

* Job xlii. 12. † 1 Sam. ii. 7. ‡ Psa. xxxiv. 5.
 || Zech. ix. 12. § Gen. xvii. 1. ¶ Eph. iii. 20.

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poor for the soul of man. *Look unto Me and be saved :**—*Acquaint thyself with Me and be at peace :†*—*Follow Me and you shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.‡* However dark and distressing the present state of things may appear, *commit thy fatherless children to my care, I will preserve them alive ; and let the widows trust in me.*¶

Still the beloved object is gone, and your heart follows it. You can scarcely receive counsel from infinite Wildom, or comfort from Omnipotence. To every fresh encouragement you are ready to reply, *Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead ?--shall the dead arise and praise thee ?--shall thy loving kindness be declared in the grave ? or thy faithfulness in destruction ?*§ His word repeatedly assures you they shall ; and that all that are in the graves shall hear his voice ; ¶ but it informs you also, that He can do abundantly more for the living than

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a. xxxiv. 5.
Eph. iii. 20.

* Isa. xlv. 22. † Job xxii. 21. ‡ John viii. 12.
¶ Jer. xlix. 11. § Psa. lxxxviii. 10, 11. ¶ John v. 28.

merely restore their dead friends, or revive their fainting spirits ;--it teaches you that He can sanctify the separation, ---that He can give a divine life to the survivor, though dead in trespasses and sins,* and inseparably unite both in his kingdom. If the Comforter could make up for the loss of Christ's bodily presence ; yea, make it even expedient that He should go away ;† how much more can he supply the place of every creature !

May this COMFORTER, writing his word in your mind, help you to say with a confidence highly honourable to himself and his gospel, ‘ My poor perishing gourd is, indeed, withered y day before I expected it ;---my broken reed is gone ;---but God is left,---a father to the fatherless,--- an husband to the widow, ‡---and now, Lord, what wait I for ? truly my hope is in thee. || Thou canst give me, in thine house, a place and a name better than of sons and of daugh-

* Eph. ii. 1.

† John xvi. 7.

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Once more; let us endeavour, at such seasons as these, to recognize a GRACIOUS MONITOR. Whenever the Lord strikes, he speaks. Let us listen at such a time as this with humble attention; yet with holy confidence, for it is the voice of a Friend,---a wonderful Counsellor. Let us with the Prophet resolve to ascend the tower of observation, and observe what He will say unto us, and what we shall answer when we are reproved. If with him we thus watch our dispensation, at the end, like his, it shall speak.‡

God is continually raising up witnesses, and sending them in his name to sound the alarm in Zion. || He charges them to admonish the wise, as well as the

* Isa. lvi. 5.

† Hab. ii. 1-3.

‡ Hab. iii. 17, 18.

|| Joel ii. 1.

foolish Virgin, to beware of slumbering, since the bridegroom is at hand: and when one is called away, to cry to those that remain, *'Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh.'** Some indeed, like the sons of Lot, desperately scorn the admonition, and treat it as the fear of dotage. † Some, like those in the Acts, are in doubt, saying one to another, *'What meaneth this?'*---and others mocking reply, *'These men are full of new wine.'* † But TRUTH, like a rock furiously assaulted, but unshaken, remains to scorn its scorers: and, while the witnesses continue to bear a faithful and consistent testimony, God, sooner or later, appears in vindication of their integrity and his own word. Entering a careless family, he smites the first born; and, as one that will be heard, calls aloud, *'Awake, thou that sleepest; arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.'* ||

And is it not, my afflicted friend, an

* Matt. xxiv. 44.

† Acts ii. 12, 13.

† Gen. xix. 14.

|| Eph. v. 14.

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infinite mercy, if by any means, God will enter with such a light,---that he will rouse such a sleeper?---that, by his minister Death, he will arrest the attention of him who has slighted every other minister? What patience! what long suffering! to take such an one a part; bring him from noise and occupation into the secret and silent chamber; speak to his heart; and seal the most important truths on it, by the most affecting impressions! Is it not saying, *'How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I make thee as Admah?'** Certain it is, that questions, which before only reached the ear, often now, like barbed arrows, remain fixed in the conscience---conscience, no longer stifled or amused, discovers the **CONTENDER**, and, trembling before him, cries, *'Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God.'*†

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This, I say, is often the case, and

* Hosea xi. 8.

† Jer. xxxi 18.

should it be realized in yours, as it has been in that of your present Visitor ; if, instead of flying for relief to every object but God; you are brought humbly to his feet with patient submission, serious inquiry, fervent prayer, holy resolution, and firm reliance ; if, in a word, by the severest stroke, the enchantment is also broken,---your soul escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler,* and returned to its proper REST ; what reason will you have to say,

Those we call *wretched* are a chosen band.
Amid my list of blessings infinite,
Stand this the foremost,---' *That my heart has bled.*'
For *All* I bless Thee ;---Most, for the *severe* :
Her death,---*my own* at hand---

But death at hand (as an old writer expresses it) should be death in view, and lead us to consider next:

OUR PROSPECTS from this house of Sorrow, as the inhabitants of a present and future world. Many suppose that they can best contemplate the present world by crowding the House of

* Psa. cxxiv. 7.

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 ing eyes they see not.†

Look at the deceased, and contem-
 plate present things. His days an hand-
 breath;---his beauty consumed like the
 moth-fretten garment;---his cares and
 pleasures a dream;---his attainments as
 the grass, which flourisheth in the mor-
 ning, and in the evening is cut down
 and withered;---his years a tale;---his
 strength, labour and sorrow. So soon
 is the whole cut off and fled, that we
 cannot help repeating with the Psalmist,
 Verily—every man—at his best estate—
 is altogether: VANITY, †—or a vapour
 that appeareth for a little while, and
 then vanisheth away. †

Few, perhaps, reflect, when they fol-
 low a friend to his grave, that life itself
 exhibits little more than a funeral pro-
 cession, were friend follows friend, weep-
 ing to-day and wept for to-morrow.

* Eccl. vii. 4.

† Mark viii. 18.

† Psa. xxxix. and xc.

James iv. 14.

While we are talking of one, another passes—we are alarmed, but behold a third! There is, however, relief in this very reflection; ‘My friend is gone, but am I weeping as if I were to *stay*?—Is he sent for in the *morning*? in the *afternoon* I shall certainly be called.’ Inconsolable distress, therefore, may ungird our loins, may waste our hours, and cause us to make fatal mistakes in the journey, but does not bring us forward a single step towards meeting our friends in that state, where present joys and sorrows will be recollected only as the dream of a distempered night.

If, after many former admonitions, an ENEMY still urged us to climb; and, as we ascended, pointed to the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them;* if our hearts have been the dupes of the vanishing prospect, and our ears eagerly heard the proposal, ‘*all these things will I give thee* ;’† let us now hear the voice of a FRIEND, calling us, though in an unexpected way, to commune with

* Matt. iv. 8.

† Matt. iv. 9.

our heart and be still;*—to know, at least in this our day of visitation, the things which belong to our peace; † and also what those things are which hide them from our eyes.

It is at such seasons as these that we more clearly detect the lies of life. It is in the House of Mourning that, what the scripture calls, lying vanities, lie peculiarly naked and exposed. Let us here examine what so lately dazzled us. What now is the purple and fine linen † that caught our eye? What is it to fare sumptuously only for a day? Who is he that cries, *'Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thy ease, eat, drink, and be merry?'* || I trust you now feel the deep misery and utter ruin of that dying creature, who can say nothing better to his soul than this. You can scarcely help crying out, *'What foolishness, what madness this, in a moment so interesting as life!—with a prospect so awful as Eternity!'*

* Psa. iv. 4. † Luke xix. 42. † Luke xvi. 19.
|| Luke xii. 19.

The truth is, God speaks variously, and incessantly to man respecting his present and future ; but present things seize his heart, blind his eyes, stupify his conscience, and carry him away captive. Now "affliction is God speaking louder," and striving with the heart of man :—crying, as he has lately in your house, *' Arise and depart, this is not your rest ; it is polluted,* and, if you persist in attempting to make a rest of it, *will destroy you with a sore destruction.**

Our plan, indeed, is the very reverse of his : we love our native soil, and try to strike our roots deeper and deeper into it : firmly fixed in earth, we vain draw our whole life, strength, and nourishment, from it. And here should not only fade as a leaf, † but every tree that beareth not good fruit, be hewn down and cast into the fire, † did not mercy interpose.

We seldom, however, discern mercy in its first approach. Is it mercy that

* Mic. ii. 10. † Isa. lxiv 6. Matt. iii. 10. * John x

asks variously tears me up by the roots?—that cuts the
 respecting his fibres of sweetest union?—does it prune
 future ; but away the finest branches? nip the love-
 art, blind his best buds? and cover the earth with
 e, and carry blossoms?—Yes, verily,—since the very
 “affliction is life of the whole often depends upon the
 and striving removal of a part, mercy will wound to
 dying, as he heal : regard to the tree will strip off its
Arise and de- most flourishing suckers : the great Hus-
it is polluted, bandman will not fail to adopt the sharp-
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you with a choicest plants : for every branch that
 beareth fruit he purgeth it, that it may
 very reverse bring forth more fruit.* Though the
 soil, and try Lord cause grief, yet it is in compassion,
 and deeper and according to the multitude of his
 , we would mercies, for he doth not afflict willing-
 length, and y, nor grieve the children of men; †
 d here we out soon or late instructs all his children
 † but with to say, ‘*I know, O Lord, that thy judg-*
 good fruit, *ments are right, and that thou in faithful-*
 o the fire, † *ness hast afflicted me.* †

Let not, therefore, the change of the
 ern mercy present scene discompose but direct us :
 mercy that it changes, in order to present the only

Matt. iii. 10. * John xv. 2. † Lam. iii. 32, 33. † Psal. cxix. 75.

unchangeable one. By thus rending the veils which men try to throw over a dying state, and discovering TEKEL* written on every creature, the most careless are often so roused, that they seem to awake and recover themselves: they appear, for a time at least, to become wise, to understand these things, and seriously to consider their latter end.† May this salutary impresson, however, my dear friend, never be worn from your mind, but lead you habitually to look from this fading, to that abiding prospect which is to be found only in the ETERNAL WORLD,—and on which it may be necessary here to drop a reflection or two.

I think you must often have remarked that the urgency and bustle of present things, not only raise a cloud of dust before our future prospects, but early beget a false principle that the present life is the only one. You must also have observed that ten thousand false maxims, which daily fly through the world, take

* i. e. wanting. Dan. v. 27. † Deut. xxxii. 29.

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their rise from this prime falsehood. Whereas, in fact, the present life, instead of being the whole, is comparatively nothing: a stage, a porch, a dream, a weary day's journey. What is this drop to the ocean before us? What this moment to eternity? As a theatre, indeed, in which God exhibits the wonders of his providence and grace; or as a stage, on which we are to act our parts without any opportunity of repetition; the present state is infinitely grand and important: but surely no greater imposition can be put upon the pilgrim than to persuade him that he is at home; or to make him forget and drown his eternal interest in such a vision of the night as Life.

Do you not, my Dear Friend, sensibly perceive this? While you sit here, does not the cloud break? and the mist subside? Have you not already so realized a better, that it is an heavenly country,* as to admire him who pitched

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* Heb. xi. 16.

only a tent here,* but stedfastly looked for a city that hath foundations?† Are you not ready to take hold of the skirt of this Jew, saying, 'We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you?'‡

Seeing this, you only see truths ever exhibited in the scriptures, and living principles in all who are taught of God;|| for he alone can enable us to use his own discoveries; and how gracious is he, when he removes any object which might prevent our thus seeing Himself, his kingdom, and his righteousness? or whose removal may prove the occasion of our seeking them?

Just before the flood, there were, doubtless, among their men of renown,§ admired projectors; but there appears to have been but one truly wise man among them: one who saw and seriously regarded his prospects. And he, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an Ark

• Heb. xi. 9. † Heb. xi. 10. ‡ Zech. viii. 23.
|| John vi. 45. § Gen. vi. 4.

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to the saving of his house.* Now such a man is the Christian. He feels the world passing away, with the lusts thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.† ‘I feel,’ says he, ‘that however finely they dress the pageant of this world, it *passeth by*; ‡ to a creature like me, going, hastening, such an *Ark* is worth more than ten thousand dying worlds. Let the gay laugh; *let the despisers wonder and perish*; || with such prospects before me, I *must* be serious. He that cannot lie has revealed the *terrors* as well as the glories of a future state: he speaks of a *worm that dieth not*, and a *fire that is not quenched*, § as well as of a *fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore*. ¶ I must not, I dare not, shut my eyes against these awful realities. I will not sacrifice my soul to a jest, nor miss the single opportunity afforded me, for its salvation. He that calls for my whole heart is worthy of it: while the things which have hitherto engrossed it,

* Heb. xi. 7. † I John ii. 17. ‡ I Cor. vii. 31.
 || Acts xiii. 41. § Mark ix. 44. ¶ Psa. xvi. 11.

though they cannot satisfy, I find they can ruin it—*I will therefore arise and go to my Father,**—to my Saviour, who has promised to *cast out none that come unto him.†* Yea, doubtless, I *count all things but loss that I may be found in him,‡* the true ARK, the only REFUGE, which God has provided for perishing sinners.

Such a man, indeed, is the Christian, but the Christian, after all, is but a man. In a state like this, he needs to be continually reminded of his own principles. Even the wise Virgin slumbers though the Bridegroom is at hand. But a cry which will at midnight awaken the world: one like that in the house of Pharaoh for his first-born; or that so lately heard in yours. A cry, which while it rouses the sleeper, fills his eyes with tears and his heart with pangs; often produces such views of God, of the present, and of the eternal state, as all other monitors would have attempted in vain.

* Luke xv. 18. † John vi. 37. ‡ Phil. iii. 8. 9.

* 1 Pet.

Here then, my afflicted, but, I hope, instructed, friend, let us study the heavenly science of gaining by losses, and rising by depressions. Leaving the wilderness, like Moses, let us ascend the mount of scriptural discovery, and survey a prospect of which his was but a shadow. Let us look from vicissitude and desolation to what alone is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away;* and, in the house of affliction and death, let us contemplate a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens.† How refreshing to look from a family bereft of its companions and comforts to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem; to an innumerable company of angels; and to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven!‡—the only family which cannot be divided;—the only friendship which shall not disappoint our warmest expectation.

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* 1 Pet. i. 4. † 2 Cor. v. 1. ‡ Heb. xii. 22, 23.

Glorious as this prospect is, (perhaps you are ready to reply) 'I have been long in the habit of viewing it very indistinctly. My attention has been so fixed on one below, that I live looking into the grave rather than beyond it. My spirits are so broken, my heart so wounded, and my eyes so dim with watching and weeping, that I can hardly read what is before me, or recollect what I read. If serious reflection composes me for a few moments, I soon relapse, and seem to lose sight of every support. Y indeed severely feel what you say concerning the present life, but I view the glories of the future like a starving creature, who, looking through the gate of the wealthy, surveys a plenty which but increases his anguish.'

There is, however, this difference at least between your cases; the plenty which you see is yours, if you are really willing to accept it. You never received a gift which was so freely bestowed, or so suited to your necessity, as the gift of God, which is eternal life through

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Jesus Christ.* In order to view this more distinctly, let us consider the sufficiency of

OUR PROVISIONS—For wisdom hath built her house, she hath killed her beasts, she hath mingled her wine, and furnished her table. She also crieth upon the highest places of the city, *‘Who so is simple, let him turn in hither;’* and to him that wanteth understanding she saith, *‘Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled; for-sake the foolish and live.’†*

Man, indeed, is daily reminded by the thorns at his feet, by the sweat of his brow, and by the dust to which he is returning, that his paradise is lost: † but paradise regained is considered rather as an idea; a subject for poetry. That book, however, which I hope you have chosen as your best companion in the house of mourning, like the vision of Jacob, not only shews the heavens opened, but discovers a gracious medium of communication and intercourse, as it

* Rom. vi. 23. † Prov. ix. 1—6. ‡ Gen. iii. 18, 19.

were a ladder let down from heaven to earth.* A medium so suited to the state of man, that the weakest and vilest, who is humble enough to take hold of it as God's ordinance; advance a step at a time; and call for strength to proceed; may climb by it from earth to heaven.†

Are you, my dear friend, among the number of those, who stand before God not only as stript of their comforts, but humbled under sin as the cause of all the desolations with which our fallen state abounds? Open your book at the sixty-first chapter of Isaiah. You will there perceive the most precious privilege of Paradise restored: the Creator descending to the condition and wants of his creature, and once more holding communion with him. The broken-hearted, the captive, and the mourner, are here shewn one mighty to save and to relieve: and, that such should not mistake their friend, when our Lord

* Gen. xxviii. 12.

† Compare Genesis xxviii. with John i. 51.

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stood up in the synagogue to read, he selected this passage, and, having read it, he closed the book with saying, '*This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.*'* 'I am, as if he had said, this deliverer and desire of nations; † the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever: ‡ blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted: §—blessed are ye that hunger now; for ye shall be filled: —blessed are ye that weep now; for ye shall laugh.'||

I scarcely need observe that, in an address like this, (a bow drawn at a venture) formal statements of the different topics would be improper; and, therefore, I shall not attempt to describe, in their order, the various provisions comprehended in that scheme of redemption, usually termed the gospel. It may be necessary, however, to remark, that the whole is a proposal to the broken heart, answering all its objections, and meeting all its wants: and

* Luke iv. 21. † Hag. ii. 7. ‡ Heb. xiii. 8.

§ Matt. v. 4.

|| Luke vi. 21.

that such a proposal will be cordially received only in proportion as this disposition prevails.

As it is the sick who best knows how to value a physician, the debtor a surety, and the criminal a pardon; so it is the awakened conscience alone which will embrace a constitution calculated to humble the pride, and mortify the corruptions, as well as relieve the wants of man. If without shedding of blood there can be no remission,* he, who is earnest to obtain it, will rejoice to find it though on the accursed tree: and, however the preaching of this cross shall be esteemed foolishness among them that perish;† such an one will not only rejoice in the provision, but magnify the means. *God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*‡

Our Lord represents the blessings of his kingdom under the parable of a magnificent feast, which a king made for

* Heb. ix. 22. † 1 Cor. i. 18. ‡ Gal. vi. 14.

* Matt.

cordially re- things were ready, and invitations re-
 s this dispo- peatedly sent, he points out the ruin of
 knows how the world in its indisposition to accept
 tor a sure- his gracious proposal. They made light
 on; so it is of it, and went their ways! However
 one which different their pursuits, they all agreed
 calculated to reject the invitation; they began
 mortify the with one consent to make excuse: some
 the wants, urged reasons, and some abused the
 g of blood messengers; but what is this more than
 e, who is the history of human nature in every
 ce to find age?*

Let us, however, my dear friend,
 never forget that the gate lately men-
 tioned, † though strait, is open; and
 that only unbelief and indisposition stand
 without. Christ has declared that all
 things are ready; may his gracious in-
 fluence, accompanying this humbling
 providence, form in you a spiritual taste
 for them! Certain I am that, whenever
 this is attained, his name will be as
 ointment poured forth; ‡—it will give a
 favour even to obsolete poetry.

* Matt. xxii. 1—6. † Page 30. ‡ Cant. i. 3.

Christ is a path,—if any be misled ;

He is a robe,—if any naked be ;

If any chance to hunger—he is bread ;

If any be a bondman,—he is free ;

If any be but weak,—how strong is he !

To dead men life he is ;—to sick men health ;

To blind men sight ; and to the needy wealth ;

A pleasure without loss ; a treasure without stealth.

To prepare the heart for the reception of this treasure, as a God of order, he is pleased to use a system of means ; one of which I hope he is now employing for your soul's health. I love to indulge hope, for affliction is a seed time ; and let me freely inquire, since God has called you aside, has spoken so emphatically, and you have had leisure for serious meditation, do not the provisions of the gospel appear new, sufficient, & exactly suited to your case? Do you not mark that Gold which the thief cannot steal? that foundation which no tempest can shake? that life over which death has no power? and that peace which the world can neither give nor take away? Does not the religion of Jesus, that is so forgotten and degraded among men, stand forward now as the

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one thing needful? Does not his friendship appear now to be that better part which shall not be taken away? * and which alone can help in extremities? In the wreck of human affairs, indeed, it is that God often makes his truth appear; and it causes his gospel, like a plank thrown out to the perishing mariner, to be properly known and prized.

“These are the great occasions which force the mind to take refuge in religion: when we have no help in ourselves, what can remain but that we look up to a higher and a greater power? and to what hope may we not raise our eyes and hearts when we consider that the GREATEST power is the BEST.”

“Surely there is no [truly wise] man who, thus afflicted, does not seek succour in the Gospel which has brought life and immortality to light. The precepts of EPICURUS, who teaches us to endure what the laws of the universe make necessary, may silence, but not content us. The dictates of ZENO,

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* Luke xix. 42.

who commands us to look with indifference on external things, may dispose us to conceal our sorrow, but cannot assuage it. Real alleviation of the loss of friends, and rational tranquility in the prospect of our own dissolution, can be received only from the promises of Him in whose hands are life and death, and from the assurances of another and better state, in which all tears will be wiped from the eyes, and the whole soul shall be filled with joy. Philosophy may insule STUBBORNNESS, but religion only can give PATIENCE.”*

In health and ease, ingenious speculations may amuse and satisfy us; but I think you now feel with me, that when He takes away the desire of our eyes with a stroke,† our sorrows are too deep to be alleviated by the mere orator or philosopher; we even turn in disgust from him who would thus trifle with our case; we need a support the world cannot afford: ‘I faint,’ says a wounded soul: ‘I want an almighty

* Johnson.

† Ezek. xxiv. 16.

arm to lean on now ; yea, a very tender and compassionate one too ;—one like that of the Son of Man. I need a merciful and faithful High Priest, who, having been tempted, knows how to succour the tempted ;* —that Man of Sorrows, that Brother born for adversity, who, being acquainted with grief, can enter in my case, and commune with me in all the peculiarities of my distress. I now need one, who can quiet me on his own breast, and speak to me with his own voice, Weep not, the child is not dead but sleepeth.† Weep not, thou afflicted, tossed with tempest,—when thou passest through the waters I will be with thee.‡ It is true this is the land of death, but I am the resurrection and the life ;||—this is indeed, a dry and thirsty land where no water is ;§ but I will lead you to fountains of living waters : I will wipe away all tears from your eyes.¶

* Heb. ii. 17, 18.

† Luke viii. 52.

‡ Isa. xliii. 2.

§ John xi. 25.

¶ Psa. lxxiii. 1.

¶ Rev. vii. 17.

You are ready, perhaps, to say, 'O that I knew where I might find him ;'—but religion has been with me rather a case of necessity than the high privilege of communing with such a comforter. I feel the misery of living at such a distance from my heavenly Friend, (especially at this time) but want liberty to approach nearer :— Could I, indeed, repose on the bosom you just mentioned—"but alas! my understanding is clouded, my faith weak, sense strong, and Satan busy in filling my thoughts with false notions, difficulties, and doubts respecting a future state, and the efficacy of prayer."* Though I see very gracious proposals made to returning sinners, I tremble to venture ;—Death itself reminds me of transgression :—My thoughts fly every where but to God.

We readily acknowledge that among other views of death, it should be regarded as the wages of sin.† It is also natural for convinced sinners to tremble

* Lady Russel's Letters. † Rom. vi. 23.

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before a Judge who charges even angels with folly. However pride may boast, or ignorance presume, he who measures by the standard of a law which is so spiritual as to regard a corrupt desire, will conclude with the apostle, that every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God.* A view of the divine character, and of his own, led not only a publican to situate upon his breast, as the seat of apostacy and pollution, and cry, *God be merciful to me a sinner,*† but so perfect and upright a man as Job to abhor himself, and repent in dust and ashes:‡ I may add that, as we become proficient in their school, we shall be more ready to confess than to complain;—we shall learn to justify God in any instance of his righteous displeasure; and humbly own, that he has laid upon us far less than our iniquities deserve.||

But while the Christian, as a penitent,

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* Rom. iii. 19.

† Job. xlii. 6.

‡ Luke xviii. 13.

|| Psal. ciii. 10.

looks upon him whom he has pierced and mourns ; as a believer, he looks at him who was wounded for transgression and hopes. He finds it as desperate to doubt the remedy, as to deny the disorder. Having formerly rushed headlong with the presumptuous, he now fears perishing with the fearful and unbelieving.* He sees an atonement of God's own providing ; he pleads upon God's own authority the merit of that blood which cleanseth from all sin ; † and by thus receiving the record which God gives of his Son, he sets his seal to it that God is true. ‡

Is this, my dear friend, in any degree your case ?—Fearful, wandering, and wounded as your heart is, does it yet discover a resting place ?—Instead of wishing to evade the charge of “ manifold sins and wickedness committed by thought, word and deed against the Divine Majesty ; is the remembrance of them grievous, and the burden of them intolerable ?” Do you sincerely desire

* Rev. xxi. 8. † 1 John i. 7. ‡ John iii. 33.

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to be freed from this burden, and to enter into the glorious liberty of the children of God?—that heavenly communion and rest which has been mentioned? Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world! *—Behold him exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins! †—Come to him as a sinner, and touch, with humble confidence, but the hem of his garment, and you shall be made whole; ‡—Wait upon him, and you shall obtain both strength and liberty; for if the Son make you free, you shall be free indeed. || Respecting your sense of weakness, let me add that provision made for fallen nature, corresponding to its various wants, is at once a character and an evidence of our religion. It is a glorious peculiarity of it, that its promises correspond with its precepts. To use the language which best conveys its meaning, The kingdom of God is not in word only, but also

* John i. 29. † Acts v. 31. ‡ Matt. ix. 21.

|| John viii. 36.

in POWER.* He who enlightens the blind eyes, undertakes to strengthen the weak hands, and to confirm the feeble knees.† The Spirit of wisdom and understanding is sent to be also a Spirit of might, of grace, and of supplication.‡ It is peculiar to our Teacher that he enables as well as instructs his disciples; he first presents a prospect of the inheritance, then a title to it thro' his death, and together with these, affords strength to rise and pursue it. Turn to the thirty-sixth chapter of Ezekiel, and you will find your case amply provided for,|| but recollect that it is added, *'I will yet for this be inquired of, to do it for them.'* § *Is any afflicted, let him pray.* ¶

But I must not pass by the temptation you mentioned respecting the efficacy of prayer: you will, perhaps, too readily object, 'Here it is that I sink;

* 1 Cor. iv. 20.

† Isa. xxxv. 3—6.

‡ Compare Zech. xii. 10. with Eph. i. 19.

§ Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27. ¶ Ezek. xxxvi. 37.

¶ James v. 13.

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I prayed earnestly for the life of the deceased; I thought at one time I saw signs of a recovery, but the event makes me fear that I was not heard, and that I have no FRIEND left now in earth or heaven.

A little consideration will, I hope, shew you your mistake, and prove that a petition may be graciously accepted, when its particular object is not granted, Did not our LORD declare that his Father heard him always? * Are we not told that when in the days of his flesh he had offered up prayers, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that is able to save him from death, he was HEARD in that he feared? † But consider I pray you how he was heard: Certainly not by having the cup taken away, (a cup at which human nature, however perfect must recoil) but in being supported when he prayed; in being supported while he drank it; and in victoriously accomplishing his grand design through drinking it to the very dregs.

* John xi. 42.

† Heb. v. 7.

To come nearer to our own condition, we find St. PAUL going to CHRIST for deliverance from some severe trial which he calls a thorn in the flesh; he tells us that he also was heard, and in the same way as his master; not by being released from suffering, but by receiving something more honourable and advantageous; namely, that grace which not only supports a believer through his trials, but puts a healing virtue into them.

Far removed from the holy resignation of our master, we too much resemble in our prayers, the impatience of our children. I remember when a sick one of mine has had some medicine to take, he has called loudly to me to come and assist him against those who were endeavouring to force it down: he probably, wondered at my refusing to relieve him; but the little sufferer did not consider, though often told, that he was not to be helped in that way; he did not recollect, that while I tenderly felt his cry, the very compassion

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I felt for him, and the desire I had to relieve him, kept me from taking away the bitter draught.

The truth is (and it is a truth frequently told us) that our heavenly Father always sends his children the things they ask, or better things. He answers their petitions in kind or in kindness. But while we think only of our ease, he consults our profit:—We are urgent about the body, he about the soul: We call for present comfort, he considers our everlasting rest: and therefore, when he sends not the very things we ask, he hears us by sending greater than we can ask or think.*

Is any, therefore, afflicted, let him pray; not only in the public sanctuary, or in the retired closet, but let him consider that there is a new and living way consecrated through the vail† of a Redeemer's human nature, from every scene of retirement or action to a MERCY SEAT; where he satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness; especially such as sit in dark-

* Eph. iii. 20.

† Heb. x. 20.

ness and the shadow of death.* Our very misery and infirmity should, in defect of other preachers, point out the seat of our relief; and direct such frail and depraved creatures to the common friend of the weary and heavy laden. Pouring into his bosom all our complaints, we at once obey his command, honour his character, and obtain his assistance: for we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.†

Is it not a time of need with you? endeavour, at his command, to approach with an holy confidence, for the supply of all you need according to his riches in glory;‡ and, at this time particularly, for the illumination and comfort of his Holy Spirit. He whom you supplicate not only invites, but reasons with you. *‘If ye, being evil, know*

* Psa. cvii. 9, 10. † Heb. iv. 15, 16. ‡ Phil. iv. 19.

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*how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy spirit to them that ask him !**

The religion of education and custom obtains, more or less, every where ; but serious, vital, spiritual religion, is a case of necessity with us all. We summon our forces, we ransack our stores, we spend our money, for that which is not bread, and our labour for that which satisfieth not ; † we look every way, and call to every thing, till each in return loudly replies, *It is not in me.* ‡ Well, indeed, will it be, if, after all our fruitless efforts, we are brought to feel that the provisions of the Gospel are the only bread for a hungry soul, the only balm for a wounded heart.

However foreign, my dear friend, these truths were from your consideration when we first sat down together, if

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* Luke xi. 13.

† Isa. lv. 1.

‡ Job xxviii. 14.

it shall please Him, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness,* to shine into your heart, and effectually discover the exceeding riches of his grace in these provisions; then, though you sit weeping over your loss, we are assured from unquestionable authority, that angels are rejoicing for† your unspeakable gain. We are certain also, that not only every real friend will cry, *'This day is salvation come to the house†* where we lately wept; but that drying your tears, you, yourself will be compelled to express your grateful sense of the correction you now deplore, and sing, with a companion and fellow-proficient in the school of affliction,||

Father, I bless thy gentle hand;
 How kind was thy chastising rod
 That forc'd my conscience to a stand,
 And brought my wand'ring soul to God!
 Foolish and vain, I went astray
 Ere I had felt thy scourges Lord;
 I left my guide,—I lost my way;

* 2 Cor. iv. 6. † Luke xv. 10. ‡ Luke xix. 9.

|| Psa. cxix. 67—71.

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But now I love and keep thy word.

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OUR COMPANIONS in the house of mourning. Society is peculiarly pleasant when we are benighted on a journey : and especially that of a citizen of the place to which we are going. It is encouraging to travel with those, who are convinced, that if they are chastened of the Lord, it is, that they should not be condemned with the world.* Blessed are the poor in spirit ; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven : † and here they are educating for it. Here they sit at the foot of the cross, and receive lessons of faith and patience, of humility and temperance.

Blessed also are the pure in heart ; for they here see God ; ‡ who never so unveils himself as in seasons of distress. In sight of his character and word, they bow before his providence, yea trust him in the stroke ; for hope is made to arise here, as a light in darkness.

* 1 Cor. xi. 32. † Matt. v. 3. ‡ Matt. v. 8.

Here the spiritual husbandman is taught to go forth weeping, and bearing the precious seed of faith and love, penitence and prayer; assured that he shall come again with joy, bringing his sheaves with him,* Here also the heavenly scholar acquires the tongue of the learned, that he should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.† And here the true soldier of Jesus Christ is found fighting the good fight of faith, and laying hold of eternal life‡ in the very valley and shadow of death. He is here instructed to cast down imaginations,|| those reasonings which peculiarly infest and darken the house of mourning; and taking the shield of faith, and the sword of the spirit; he wrestles not only with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers;§— a mighty though secret conflict which God shall one day declare to the world; and which, when explained, will leave

* Psa. cxxvi. 6. † Isa. l. 4. ‡ 1 Tim. vi. 12.
 || 2 Cor. x. 5. § Eph. vi. 12—16, 17.

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its most celebrated heroes silent in darkness.*

‘Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock;’† for in this house they all have left the prints of their feet. Here stood Jacob weeping over his beloved Rachel;‡ and here Aaron deplored his sons.¶ Here we trace the steps of David going up to his chamber and crying with a loud voice, ‘Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son! my son!’§ and those of Ezekiel, who, forbidden to cry, silently resigned the desire of his eyes to the stroke.¶ But enumeration is vain: hither came all the sons of God, the only begotten not excepted, for JESUS himself stood and wept at the grave of a friend.**

With such company, is it not far better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting?††—I knew one of these, a man who had seen

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* 1 Sam. ii. 9. † Cant. i. 8. ‡ Gen. xxxv. 20.

¶ Lev. x. 3. § 2 Sam, xviii. 33.

¶ Ezek. xxiv. 16. ** John xi. 35. †† Eccl. vii. 2.

affliction by a rod* like yours ;—a man who walked and wept in solitude, but with no expectation of being overheard. There is something sacred in grief, and we cannot listen to its effusions with too much candour : great candour, indeed, is here required, but, if afforded, it may procure you at least, a companion, as you pass through this vale of tears.

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* * * * * *Set thee up way marks ;†* I desire here to set them up, and to record the severest of my visitations in the house of my pilgrimage. Lord prepare me for the next!

‘ I perceive I could not have properly sympathised with a friend in a similar case before this stroke. I could not have understood it.’

‘ I have, at times, so felt the importance of eternal things, that I thought the loss of any present comfort would be tolerable :—but I had no idea how much de-

* Lam. iii. 1.

† Jer. xxxi. 21.

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ended on being ready, when the Son of Man came in such a providence.'

' I feel I now stand in the right position to see the world and the word ;— they both appear under aspects entirely new.

' When I find my joys "packed up and gone ;" my heart slain ; the delight of my eyes taken away ;—when I recollect who is gone before her, who is following, and what remains for the world to offer ; my heart cries, *I loathe it, I would not live alway ;**—' I thank God that I am also to go.'

' I perceive I did not know how much my life was bound up in the life of a creature : when she went, nothing seemed left : one is not ; and the rest seem a few thin and scattered remains.'

' And yet how much better for my lamb to be suddenly housed, to slip unexpectedly into the fold to which I was conducting her, than remain exposed here ?—perhaps become a victim ?'

' I cried, ' O Lord, spare my child !'

* Job. vii. 16.

—he did—but not as I meant ; he snatched it from danger, and took it to his own home.’

‘ I have often prayed, ‘ Lord, soften my heart ! humble my pride ! destroy my levity ! ’ I knew enough of his way to fear the means ; and he has in mercy towards me, regarded my soul more than my feelings.’

‘ I prayed earnestly for her life : duty compelled me to say, ‘ *Thy will be done.* ’—but I meant nothing.’

‘ O my God, how long hast thou come seeking fruit on this tree ! * how much hast thou done to done to cultivate it ?—shall it still remain fruitless ? shall it be cut down after all ?’

‘ My passions forged impressions that she would live ; but I now plainly perceive I am called to regard God and not impressions.’

‘ I have been long like one in a fever attended at times, with a strong delirium : I begged hard that I might not

* Luke xiii. 7.

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be bled, but he meant a cure, and pierced my heart.*

‘ O how slender, how brittle the thread on which hang all my earthly joys !’

‘ I wish ever to be asking, ‘ Am I ready, should he send again and take * * *, or * * *, or myself?’—Setting my house in order* will not make death approach sooner ; but, that it will render his coming much easier, I feel by sad experience.’

‘ When I pass by the blaze of dissipation and intemperance, I feel a moment’s relief. I say to my heart, ‘ Be still ;’—at least she is not left to follow these *ignes fatui* : how much better is even the grave for my T——, than the end of these things ?’†

‘ It is vain for me to wish, as I have done, to leave the world and go to my Father, that I might enquire into the whole of the case ;—the reasons, the steps, the issue, &c. In a short time

* Isa. xxxviii. 1.

† Rom. vi. 21.

I shall,—but he says enough now, if I have ears to hear.’

‘ In the mean time, help me, O my God and Father, to recollect that I received this drop of earthly comfort from a spring which still remains! help me to feel that nothing essential is altered! for with thee is the fountain of life :*—part of myself is already gone to thee, help what remains to follow. We

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 If this humble attempt to improve your affliction has been attended with any success, you will readily admit a few concluding hints with respect to

OUR DUTY in such circumstances. And one of the first, and principal duties of the state, is, as hath been expressed, to **ACKNOWLEDGE** God in it. It was charged upon some, that they returned not to him that smote them, nor sought the Lord † in their distress. On the contrary, the clear apprehension Job had of a divine hand in his afflictions, is as instructive as his patience

* Psa. xxxvi. 9. † Isa. ix. 13.

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me, O myder them. While Grief rent his man-
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ence un-are with thee : thou hast appointed him
his bounds which he cannot pass. † In-
stead of fixing our attention upon means

* Job i. 21.

† Job xiv. 5, 6.

and creatures, of which we know so very little, let us turn to Him who wrought by these instruments, and merely effected his own determinations by them. Cease from man, for wherein is he to be accounted of;* Let not the creature hide the Creator, nor present things remain the fatal screen of the future; but in every occurrence, mark the great Cause, of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things :† who numbereth the very hairs of our head, and without whom even a sparrow falls not to the ground.‡

While others, therefore are wandering without an object, and bereaved without a comforter, yea, are going to their worst enemy for relief, let us endeavour to say with Peter, ‘ Lord, *to whom shall we go,* || *but to THEE ?*’ Consider the great Physician as now proposing a most serious question to your conscience, ‘ *Wilt thou be made whole ?*’ § May the language of your heart be that of

* Isa. ii. 32. † Rom. xi. 36. ‡ Matt. x. 29, 30.
 || John vi. 68. § John v. 6.

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the apostle's, "If by any means;"* then, though seemingly swallowed up of this grief, like Jonah, you shall find a resource in it, and finally be preserved by it. † This dart, like that which once pierced an imposthume in battle, shall bring health with its wound; and you shall be enabled, with many that are gone before you, to say, *'The Lord hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death.'* ‡

Duty also directs you to moderate your grief. Our heavenly Father, who knows our frame, and remembers that we are but dust, || allows us to mourn when he afflicts us; he often, in his providence, calls us to it, and charges us to weep with them that weep: § but he admonishes us also of a danger on each hand. *'My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.'* ¶ If we seriously profess christianity, our very profession implies, (not only a subjection

* Phil. iii. 11. † Jon. ii. 7—10. ‡ Psa. cxviii. 18.
 || Psa. ciii. 14. § Rom. xii. 15. ¶ Heb. xii. 5.

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to our Lord's will, but) that we have special resources in our affliction; several of which have been already named: that, among other of our privileges, there is a peace from God which passeth all understanding, to keep our hearts and minds* through life and death; and that we have many reasons for not sorrowing as others who have no hope.† Besides which, christians have a post of honour to maintain: an high calling‡ to demonstrate and commend: we shall (like the pilot in a storm) be brought to our principles; and, as sorrowful yet always rejoicing,|| should prove that we have them not now to learn.

On the contrary, there is such a thing as nursing and cherishing our grief; employing a "busy meddling memory to muster up past endearments," and personate a vast variety of tender and heart-rending circumstances. There is a tearing open the wound afresh by

* Phil. iv. 7.

† Thes. iv. 13.

‡ Phil. iii. 14.

|| 2 Cor. vi. 19.

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flooping to the senses, and speaking to the heart of man:" ever saying, 'Look to my cross, take my yoke, and lean upon my arm, and ye shall find rest.' He sought the house of mourning to comfort the sisters of Lazarus: he met a widow following her only child, and, when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, '*Weep not.*'* May he meet you at this time, my dear friend, with consolations which none but himself can afford: and then, at the very grave, shall that saying be brought to pass, '*Death is swallowed up in victory.*'† Let such fear, as despise our heavenly friend, our prospects, provisions, companions, and sense of duty: God with us and all things in God, is light in darkness, life in death. The words which revived him, who styles himself your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ,‡ remain to cheer a solitude darker (if possible) than his. '*Fear*

* Luke vii. 13. † 1 Cor. xv. 54. ‡ Rev. i. 9.

not ; I am the first and the last ; I am he that liveth and was dead ; and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen : and have the keys of hell and of death.*

To conclude :—The late event solemnly repeats its author's charge, "BE YE ALSO READY."† Your friend is gone : your following is certain : it may be sudden ; it may be next. But should it take place this night, and find you provided with nothing better for the change than the miserable subterfuges of the profane, or the scarcely less miserable supports of the formal, what an alarm (if you are not left to the most affecting delusion or stupidity) will it occasion ! What an awful transition to pass from the SAVIOUR to the JUDGE ! without love to him ; without even an acquaintance with him ; unwilling, unreconciled, unrenewed ! And to him who has so often invited you, warned you, and, at times, affected your conscience with the truths we have been considering !—What a

* Rev. i. 17, 18.

† Matt. xxiv. 44.

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