

Original Sketch.

For the Christian Messenger.

Excelsior, or higher, still higher.

CHAPTER 4.

"Gone to the slumber which may know no waking, Till the loud requiem of the world shall swell; Gone where no sound thy still repose is breaking, In a lone mansion through long years to dwell; Where the sweet gales that herald bud and blossom, Pour not their music, nor their fragrant breath; A seal is set upon thy budding bosom, A bond of loneliness,—a spell of death!

How have the garlands of thy childhood withered, And hope's false anthem died upon the air! Death's cloudy tempests o'er thy way have gathered, And his stern bolts have burst in fury there. On thy pale forehead sleeps the shade of even, Youth's braided wreath lies stained in sprinkled Yet looking upward in its grief to heaven, [dust, Love should not mourn thee, save in hope and trust."

Death! what a variety of meanings that one word has. To some it sounds as the knell that will bury their dearest hopes and fondest anticipations. To the poor sufferer it is the signal of his release from pain and suffering.

To the prattling child it seems a thing of terror, and when he sees his companion cold and still in death, he shrinks from the touch of the icy fingers. To the Christian it is the key to unlock untold treasures. He can look beyond the dark grave and see a home prepared for him on high and through the shadows of the tomb he can see the golden gates and pearly streets of that new Jerusalem "whose builder and maker is God." The aged christian whose 'faltering steps long have tended to the dark and silent tomb,' knows that his earthly pilgrimage is almost o'er and he can see peaceful death approaching; but to him it brings no fears; his 'peace is made with God'—he has borne the cross through many long and weary years, and the crown is almost within his grasp.

Death often snatches away some loved one from our midst, and we find it hard indeed to say 'Thy will be done,' but he who 'doeth all things well' has some good reason for thus afflicting his children. "Those whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." He sees that we are earth-bound in our affections, and therefore he smites us, and though at first our hearts upbraid him who has so kindly aroused us, yet are we not thus led to retrace our steps. The hand of God has cut asunder the bonds that bound us here, but the same hand is drawing our thoughts and affections up "higher, still higher" unto heaven.

We may have seen one whom we loved fade and die. Death; with his awful solemnity,—with his profound mystery,—has set his seal upon that face of beauty, and the eyes that looked so kindly shall look on us no more, and the lips that spoke so lovingly shall speak to us no more. The warm fountain is frozen of the form once instinct with life; the silver cord has been loosed,—the golden bowl broken. We saw not the spirit as it soared away on its upward flight, but we saw the body die, and we feel that our loved one is dead!—dead; as if, like a dream of the night it had passed forever away; and of all that had been precious to us there was no where anything remaining but the icy form which we have laid in the grave to moulder in darkness and silence, —"earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust."

While we are sorrowing for the 'loved and lost' let us remember that already their slumbering forms, touched by the quickening spirit has arisen and, clothed in immortal beauty, has reached that land where "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" and "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, nor any more pain."

There is light even in the darkest hour, though sometimes we cannot discern it. The bitterest cup is not without some sweet ingredients; but the wayward heart in its shrinking from the wormwood and gall, is slow to perceive the mercy drops. Then let us 'glory in tribulation' for the way by the cross is the way to the crown. "These are they which came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb;" and let us remember that it is through 'suffering we are made perfect' and that if we 'suffer, we shall also reign with him.'

"When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flames kindle upon thee; be not dismayed for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my right-

ousness," "For our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

"Yes, beauty dwells in all our paths,—but sorrow too is there, How oft some cloud within us dims the bright still summer air!

But know that by the lights and shades through which our pathway lies, By the beauty and the grief alike, we are training for the skies!"

Around a death couch, placed so that the soft summer wind lifted the golden tresses from the dying girl's brow and tanned her pale cheeks with its loving breath, were gathered fond friends watching with anxious faces the fleeting moments of one well beloved, but whose stay on earth will be short; for even now they see death's pale signet on her brow, and they feel that each day — each hour is drawing her nearer the dark valley of the shadow of death, lighted for her by the love of Jesus.

"For her goal is one day nearer, And her journey almost done,"

And as each day is slowly brought to a close she feels that she is one day nearer home,

"Nearer home! yes one day nearer To her Father's house on high— To the green fields and the fountains, Of the land beyond the sky."

"Ah! look thy last fond friend, on the beauty of that brow, For death's cold hand is passing o'er its marble stillness now, Those silken eyelids, weighing down upon the glazed eye; Are telling to thy aching heart the lovely one must die."

She has almost finished her course; she stands already on the shining shore and feels the pressure of the everlasting crown upon her brow. She stands just outside the golden gates—already she catches the sound of the rustling of angels' wings and the far off strains of that triumphant song, which echoes forever through the city of our God.

Annie! that wasted form, that pale and mournful brow,

O'er which thy soft, dark tresses in shadowy beauty flow,— That eye, whence soul is darting with such strange brilliancy,

Tell us thou art departing—this world is not for thee, No! not for thee is woven that wreath of joy and woe. That crown of thorns and flowers, which all must wear below!

We bend in anguish o'er thee, yet feel that thou art blessed,

Loved one, so early summoned to enter into rest.

She had borne the cross but for a short time and was now called to lay it down, and take up her crown. Only a short time had she been permitted to serve God on earth when He called her up on high; there to praise him for aye.

"She did but float a little way Adown the stream of time, With dreamy eyes watch the ripples play, Listening to their fairy chime;

Her slender sail, Ne'er felt the gale; She did but float a little way, And putting to the shore, While yet 'twas early day, Went calmly on her way, To dwell with us no more.

No jarring did she feel, No grating on her vessel's keel; A strip of silver sand, Mingled the waters with the land, Where she was seen no more."

Annie Neil was dying.

Dying in beauty! ere sorrow had taken One tint from the rose that lay warm on her cheeks, Before the dark shadows that follow life's morning, Had shrouded the blossom so lovely and meek.

Dying in youth!—not decrepid and aged. Weary and earth-worn and sick of the strife; Called to the grave in the morn of existence, Summoned to death from the threshold of life!

Dying in peace! on her fair, tranquil bosom, Rest her white fingers so wasted and thin; Over her features a calm smile is straying, Type of the peace of God, reigning within.

Smile on her pleasantly—tell her not gloomily, Death the grim tyrant, is coming anon; Say to her, "Annie, an angel is waiting, Eager to take thee where Jesus has gone."

Gently and quietly smooth down her pillow, Gather fresh roses to lay in her hand; Soon will her weary soul, loosed and unfettered, Plume its faint wing for the sweet spirit-land!

Dim o'er her forehead—her pale, dewy forehead,— Cluster the shadowy waves of her hair, Smooth them not, though it be never so tenderly, Leave them untouched in their loveliness there.

Close on her cheek lie her fair blue-veined eyelids, Hiding the beauty that slumbers beneath; Tremulous now with the throbbings of weakness, Soon they will rest in the quiet of death!

Dying in girlhood, in peace, and in beauty— Dying with love o'er the dark way to shine?— Who, dearest Annie, while they wept, would not envy?

Who would not wish for an exit like thine? To Annie the tomb seemed not dark

"Since Jesus hath lain there She dreads not its gloom."

but joyfully bade farewell to all the loved and cherished scenes of life and crossed the dark river leaning on an everlasting arm;—fearlessly she went forth to meet the pale messenger; to her a welcome friend though to so many it proves indeed a "king of terrors."

"I am the resurrection and the life," "he that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."

The summer winds lifted the golden tresses unheeded, and the music of the trees wafted to and fro in the gentle breeze, chanted a requiem for the departed spirit's rest.

Another harp was tuned in heaven, another voice joined sweetly mingling with the angelic choir who sing day and night where 'there is known no more death' and where the 'tears are wiped from every eye,' by him who hath 'loved us and washed us in his own precious blood and made us kings and priests unto God.'

"The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed forever be the name of the Lord."

"Weep not; she is not dead but sleepeth."

"The heart is cold, whose thoughts were told In each glance of her glad, bright eye; And she lies pale who was so bright,— She scarce seemed made to die. Yet we know that her soul is happy now, Where saints their calm watch keep; That angels are crowning that fair young brow, Then wherefore do we weep."

The cheeks' pale tinge, the lids' dark fringe, That lies like a shadow there; Where beautiful in the eyes of all, And her glossy, golden hair! We will bury her under the mossy sod, And one long, bright tress we'll keep; We have only given her back to God,— Ah! wherefore do we weep?"

"Alas, Death touched the spring of life, Nor skill, nor love could save; In girlhood's freshest sweetest bloom, He bore her to the grave."

Annie's life was short but we know that what was taken from her mortal life, will be added to a glorious eternity; and that she shall spend those days and years in the presence and service of Christ in heaven which she might otherwise have spent with him and for him in the imperfect enjoyment and labours of earth. Yet her life was not in vain. She had not sown, yet she had reaped a rich harvest.

"She had not fought yet won the prize, Had never bore the cross, but she has gained the skies."

Annie was gone! gone from earth and earthly pain to gaze upon the never fading beauties of that land where there is 'known no night.' The cold hand returned not the gentle pressure and the weary limbs lie still and motionless; she is sleeping that last sleep from which nothing shall rouse her but 'the voice of the archangel and the trump of God.'

"Within her coffin now she lay, in silence long and deep, Forever closed her loving eyes, in death's last dreamless sleep, Effaced from her meek brow all lines of sickness, grief or care,

And placid as a child she lay in beauty there; While round her lips on which had dwelt the holy law of love,

Lingered a sweet, celestial smile, type of the peace above.

But toward the grave we bore our dead in silence and in sorrow, Undreaming in our present grief, the tempest of tomorrow,

And nearer as we reached our goal, the higher swelled grief's surge, That while our hearts were chanting low our Annie's funeral dirge.

Thou mayst not come again to us; we would not call thee back; To tread with us, 'midst toil and gloom, the pilgrim's desert track,'

But we shall follow where thou art, and in the trying day,

When we must tread the vale of death, thou'lt meet us on our way, A radiant messenger of God, sent from the holy throng,

Around the throne, to welcome us with angel harp and song; Oh! blest will be our meeting then, in that pure home on high,

Where sin no more, shall cloud the heart, or sorrow dim the eye."

"Annie, our deathless love is glowing, As we chant thy mournful dirge, And our bitter tears are flowing, Flowing with grief's swelling surge."

Rest thee Annie, rest thee sweetly, With the quiet, quiet, dead, Thou art slumbering, slumbering meekly, In thy lonely, lonely bed.

Annie! fast our tears are streaming, As we breathe our last farewell, Yet there's light above us beaming, Farewell Annie! then farewell!"

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

The Interval between the Old and New Testaments.

(Continued.)

BY REV. JOHN MILLER.

Another item in the history of the Jews in the period under consideration, is God's providential care of them. They remained for centuries without a king of their own, and under the supreme authority of the Babylonians, Persians, Greeks and Romans; yet God continued to regard them as the lot of his inheritance, and objects of his special care.

On their return from Babylon, the first care of the Jews was to rebuild their city and temple. In prosecuting this work, they received considerable opposition from the Samaritans. At first they claimed kindred with them, and desired to aid them; but being rejected, they became their enemies, and used their best endeavours to hinder their operations. They succeeded for a time in their object. The erection of Jerusalem and the temple, however, was the purpose of God, and nothing could thwart it. The prophets Zechariah and Haggai were exceedingly useful in encouraging the Jews in the midst of their difficulties. In view of the opposition given to the erection of the temple, Zechariah said "who art thou? O great mountain! before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain, and he shall bring forth the head-stone thereof, with shouts crying "grace, grace unto it." While this interesting text gives the assurance that in spite of all opposition the temple would rise, and in due time be completed, it foretold an event far more important, namely, that the whole company of the redeemed would in God's own time be brought to glory, although assailed by the most virulent and persevering opposition of earth and hell. As the Jews were the objects of God's special care in his providence, he put it into the heart of Nehemiah to intercede with the king of Persia on their behalf, and to go to Jerusalem, and personally to superintend the building, until in accordance with the prophecy of Zechariah, the city and temple should be completed.

The next remarkable event, in the history of the Jews, which claims our attention, is the conquest of Alexander the Great. By these conquests the Persian government was overturned, and the authority of Alexander established over the entire dominions of Persia. Judea, being a part of the Persian dominions, was entirely in the power of the conqueror. No doubt the anxieties of the Jews were excited as to their fate at his hands. But here again, we are furnished with pleasing evidences, that the Lord never leaves nor forsakes his people. Josephus, the Jewish historian, informs us, that Alexander, before leaving Macedon, had a remarkable dream, in which he saw, as he marched to Jerusalem, the high priest clothed in the habiliments of his sacred office, attended by a large company of his fellow-citizens, coming out of the city to meet him. When Alexander actually approached Jerusalem, this event occurred, his dream was realized. The dream, together with his being shewn the prediction in the sacred oracles, that he would conquer wherever he went, made the most favourable impression on his mind, and led him to treat the Jews in the most kindly manner, leaving them in the undisturbed enjoyment of all their national peculiarities. Thus the terrible hurricane of war and revolution, which swept over the length and breadth of the Persian dominions, left the people of God entirely uninjured. In this manner, he who is over all, putting down one, and setting up another, finds it easy to control the movements of the most mighty among men—in a way that will lead to the accomplishment of his purposes. A Pharaoh, a Nebuchadnezzar, a Cyrus, an Alexander the Great, all are his instruments in accomplishing his purposes when he pleases to employ them, and when they oppose his designs, he that sits in heaven shall laugh—the Lord shall have them in derision.

(To be concluded.)

Address to Rev. I. E. Bill.

In our issue of the 6th instant we gave a condensed report of the recent Valectory and Installation service at Germain Street Church, St. John, N. B. It has been suggested to us by a friend that as the Rev. I. E. Bill has many