

Sermon.

For the Christian Messenger.

A FUNERAL SERMON

For Miss Emma and Mrs. Lydia George, Sister and Wife of the Rev. William George, preached at Cambridge, West Cornwallis, on Sabbath afternoon, July 1st, 1866.

By THE REV. E. M. SAUNDERS, A. M.

"What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter."—John xiii. 7.

(Concluded.)

2. Lest a general treatment of this subject may not be productive of the greatest possible amount of consolation and instruction, in its application, let us more minutely regard, in detail, some of its essential features. It is possible and no way uncommon for one of the children of men to suffer great losses at the hands of one of his fellows, and be plunged into great trial and inconsolable grief as a consequence. And upon investigation it not unfrequently appears that the perpetrator was urged on by some deep-seated feelings of revenge or envy, in depriving his neighbor of some possession or destroying some important source of happiness. But, God, in his dealings with the sons of earth, is moved by feelings of an opposite character; and pleasure in seeing any child of the dust suffer never entered into his eternal bosom. In the dispensations of his providence, however, it is not uncommon for his dealings, even with his children, to wear an appearance, indicating that he is not only willing, but even delights in the pain and trials of his creatures. His word, however, in its dogmatic assertions unequivocally denies any such intentions or exercises. "For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." When, then, we behold any of our fellow men, or find ourselves under the pressure of some great or small trial, we must regard our heavenly Father as possessed of the tenderest compassion, and aiming with unerring wisdom to bring about our highest good, and his highest glory, by his dealings towards us; which will be invariably secured; unless we by our hostility to his government defeat the one (our own good) while our efforts will be more than futile to prevent glory from accruing to his holy name. This feature of God's providential dealings can be seen in its truest light by beholding it in the mirror of the parental relation. The parent that wrests from the hand of his child the gaudy blossom of the laurel, knows that the child might become infected with the virus of its poisonous leaf; while the child, too young to realize the danger, might be, for the time, plunged into inconsolable grief. The parent's love has suffered no diminution, but has rather been increased by this act of guardian faithfulness. This is all real and practically true, notwithstanding the pain of the much disturbed offspring. Dangers, often appear to the penetrating eye of the parent of which the happy child is unsuspectingly ignorant, and to avert which, it is necessary for the parent to call his son away from scenes of pleasure, or to consign to destruction in a summary manner, some present possessions; and then direct the attention away to new and safer objects and pursuits. Through all this, his heart knows nothing but the truest love and chiding faithfulness to his child. If we then make these admissions in the case where both the protector and the protected are mortal, blind and sinful, ought we not without the shadow of misgiving or doubt, to make the application of the illustration, where the protector is our Father in heaven, who is himself the center and source of all wisdom goodness and love? If this earthly example which falls so clearly within the limits of our comprehension, and the merits of which we can so fully appreciate, the Father is only a few paces in advance of his child, and yet his discipline commends itself to the minds of all the wise and good; how much more then should we have confidence in the sacred and salutary discipline of our heavenly parent, between whom and the wisest of his saints, there exists, in knowledge and wisdom, an infinite distance and disparity? "We have had fathers of our flesh who corrected us, and we gave them reverence, shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of Spirits and live?" "Whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives."

Accepting this, the only rational and scriptural view of this feature of God's providence, we are prepared to see riches taking wings to themselves and flying away, to see the circles of the merry plunged into grief—we are prepared to see and hear the train of mourning mothers, fathers, husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, widows and orphans which spring up along the track of death, as he stalks through the land making victims in every household and circle, from the hut to the palace, and from scenes of plenty and splendor, to those of squalor and want. To mortal eyes how strange the ways of God! His doings are marked by such an unceasing newness and change, that his particular intentions in the development of his providence, is altogether under a veil of impenetrable darkness. "He holdeth back the face of his throne and spreadeth his cloud upon it." "His ways are past finding out." "Clouds and darkness are round about him, but righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." He extracts ingredients from the richest and sweetest sources to which the human heart has access in order to mix a bowl of rare richness and flavor, which he smites to pieces with one hand while in the act of putting it to the lips of some favored one with the other; or He comes on a special visitation of favor, and touches the resources of his

bounty, and rills of pleasure come rippling down every hill side by which the happy ones are surrounded. And they continue to flow on in their abundant supply, until the recipients are unconsciously led to feel that they command their own happiness and prosperity. Then the hand at whose touch these sources gave forth their abundant supply, passes over them again, and they are dried up; and the heart is filled with a biting and bitter disappointment and grief, like that which seizes the spirits of the weary, thirsty pilgrim when he finds burning sands in the bed of the deceitful brook where he expected the flowing stream. The rod of God's correction is a severe but profitable instrument. His rod and his staff are the cymbals of the shepherd's office. The depravity and evil in the world render this course of discipline indispensably necessary. The scroll of human life is written like that of Ezekiel's within and without with lamentation and woe," but when its contents are discharged into the breasts of mortals, grief and anguish drink up the spirits. God has concealed much from us but it is a great mercy that he has informed us in plain and intelligible language that all his dealings are in love.

3. There is one other respect in which I would now invite you to consider these painful visitations at the hand of God. It appears sometimes, in observing the instrumentalities and means which he has summoned and marshalled to accomplish his great ends in the administration of his government, that his ways are the ways of man. Human wisdom sees the means to be adequate to the end. The agencies are adapted to the work, and the way is plain for its accomplishment. Any interruption or destruction of the efficient means which so clearly point to sure and ultimate success, in the eyes of mortals, would be fatal, and issue in absolute failure to the enterprise. So thought Jacob when he said, "All these things are against me," such was the conviction of another when he cried, "I shall fall one day by the hand of my enemy." There was also a growing conviction in the mind of Elijah as he cried from amid the solitude of Horeb into the ears of the God of providence, "Lord they have killed thy prophets and digged down thine altars and behold they seek my life." But the state of things in these instances were not as they seemed to be; and as it was in those examples, so it ever has been—in now and always will be, in the wide and complicated range of God's providential government. He makes an arrangement that commends itself to human wisdom, and then he smites it into confusion, and in the midst of the confusion he accomplishes his designs, which he sometimes holds up to the joyful admiration of his children, and for the chagrin and dismay of his enemies. Jacob grew rich and prosperous, notwithstanding Laban's selfish plottery. Joseph cherished his father in old age, and wept over his dying couch, although his father had regarded him as torn in pieces by some ferocious beast of prey. The bible is richly freighted with abundant examples of this nature, from the dominions of God's providential government, which lie back in the regions of a hoary antiquity. To-day he is the same on the great scale and on the small. With these facts and bible-teachings before us, shall we, for a moment, hesitate to believe that it is better for our brother, whose beloved wife sunk in the waves at his side, to plod on alone, rather than to be cheered by her presence, and sustained by her counsels? It is better for the mourning widow and her surviving children to be looking with aching hearts and streaming eyes hopefully to the presence of God for the absent member of their circle, than to be enjoying as they were accustomed to do her society on earth.

4. But our text has a promise of farther light. "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." It is not an easy thing for us to draw the dividing line between our ignorance and our knowledge of God, his works and ways. They mingle like light and darkness. There is a mysterious-revealing and concealing, of knowing and not knowing. "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing." "Clouds and darkness are round about him but righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." When we think of God, his mode of existence and the essence of his character, the extent of his omniscience, the limits of his power, our feeble faculties become paralyzed, and exhausted. Our knowledge of the operations of the government of the material universe is vague and limited, and we know but little of the working of his plans in the moral world. It is not to these features of the unknown, that the text would naturally lead our minds, but rather to what he conceals from our view of transactions enacted before our eyes. What we do know is often very painful as well as mysterious. The particular case brought before our minds in the text, was dark but not grievous. In cases of that nature it would be interesting to look forward to the time and character of the explanation; but with how much more interest do persons naturally look forward to have some dark trial explained. It may be the will of God to throw light upon this mysterious and sore trial to which our mourning friends have been recently subjected before they pass into the world of spirits. Let this be as it may, there is every reason to confidently believe, that the explanation will be given, but whether in this life or the life to come, it is not for mortals to know. In some instances, the concealed intentions of God in his dark providences, are partly revealed in this life, but doubtless other revelations are reserved for the life to come.

5. Reasoning from the results of ascertaining the purpose of God in some affliction which was deep and painful, we would confidently predict that the joy with which the soul will be filled in its glorified state, will be proportionately full and extatic, to the weight and anguish of the

sorrow endured here, of which the soul receives hereafter, in the light of heaven, a clear explanation. The loss of a dear one, or some bitter disappointment in worldly things has resulted in turning the heart of the afflicted to the knowledge and love of the Lord Jesus Christ." It is good for me that I have been afflicted, before I was afflicted I went astray." The loss of some earthly object to which our hearts had been going out in idolatry, proves sometimes the means of turning our thoughts and affections to the source. At such times the cup of joy overflows, and God is blessed with joyful lips for the great affliction. So many and varied are the ills of life, in permitting which, we often learn, at least, a part of the results of mercy and love, which it was God's good will and pleasure to accomplish by them, nor estimate the joy with which the soul is filled in receiving their explanation. If it is thus with the soul on earth, what will it be in heaven? How naturally we can ascend, as by a divinely constructed ladder, to the very portals of Paradise, through which we see, not only the countless throng of happy ones but also learn the cause of their ever increasing and eternal joy. "These light afflictions which are but for a moment, shall work out for us a far more and exceeding weight of glory." What a scene of joy, with which the afflicted one here, can be entertained; and in the contemplation of which, they can forget the corroding care and oppression of their present state, in anticipation of what they shall enjoy hereafter. "Who, are these?"—These are they that came up out of great tribulation having washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. How, as each one of the redeemed looks back and reviews the rugged and thorny path of his own earthly pilgrimage, will the cup of his heavenly pleasure overflow, and the aggregate of the joy of glorified spirits be enhanced. This, no doubt, will be one of the large and flowing springs of living water, to which God will lead his triumphant church.

6. Are we dissatisfied with the small amount that we know at present of the unrevealed purposes of God in his providential dispensations towards the children of men? Had we the power, would we break the seals of the scroll of our own sorrow, and read, here in our present state, all the hidden and merciful plans of our God? The heart of the child of God recoils at the suggestion, and would cry out let "secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed to us and to our children forever." There is much accomplished by patiently waiting. "If the vision tarry wait for it, it will come it will not tarry." We not only submit to the admonition of God in this text, but we receive all the results of the exercise of trust in God. This is a blessing in both an objective and also in a subjective tendency. Objectively it convinces the world of the value and reality of religion, when its possessor is seen bearing up under some great trial with calmness and resignation. And the effect upon the afflicted one is to bring the carnal nature into subjection to the will and ways of God. Shall we not then, "Trust in the Lord with all our hearts and lean not to our own understanding." But in the joy that will be experienced by learning "hereafter," "what we do not know now," there will be seen the wisdom of God, not only in reserving explanation for the future state, but also in the arrangement of the plan the perfection of which will be there displayed to our enraptured visions. Shall we not believe, that He, who has displayed such matchless wisdom in the harmony and utility of all the parts of the natural world of which we have any knowledge, and especially in the great plan of human redemption, has also carried the same wisdom into the arrangement of his providential government? Surely in fixing his policy of treating his creatures in this world, he has not divested himself of that wisdom and goodness, by which he has been guided in all the other departments of his wonderful operations, "Be still and know that I am God."

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

By REV. CHARLES TUPPER, D. D.

CHAPTER VIII.

PASTORATE IN ST. JOHN.

(No. 3.)

At the Meeting of the New Brunswick Baptist Association, held in Hillsborough, July 7th-11th, 1826, it was resolved to commence the publication of a Magazine; and a Committee was appointed to carry this Resolution into effect. It was agreed that the Work should be published conjointly by the Home Missionary Boards of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick; and that both should share equally in either gain or loss. The Magazine was to be issued quarterly, each No. to contain 32 pages, octavo, price 2 shillings and 6 pence a year. By mutual agreement my brethren appointed me the principal Editor. An arrangement was made with Mr. Younghusband, as Printer—succeeded by Messrs. Cameron and Seeds—and a Prospectus was published.

After my return from the Association it became manifest that a considerable degree of disaffection, resulting from circumstances con-

nected with the change of ministers, still unhappily existed in the Church. Brother Jacob Ring, a pacific and prudent man, was selected and appointed to accompany me in a visit to the disaffected members. This visitation was obviously attended with very salutary effects. Some who had been thought to be disaffected were found to be in harmony with the body. Others who had labored under strange misapprehensions, on having the matter kindly and plainly presented to them, became reconciled. By the adoption of this conciliatory course much evil was evidently either removed or prevented; as the Church was brought into a more united and prosperous state; the disquietude of my mind was greatly relieved, and the prospect of usefulness brightened.

While, however, there now appeared to be additional ties to bind me to the city, the inscrutable allotments of Providence seemed to forbid my continuance in it. Mrs. Tupper and my son Charles, then about five years old, became so ill that it was considered requisite for them to return to Cumberland, at least for a season; and my son Nathan, aged three years, was subsequently brought so low through disease that it was deemed indispensable to have him also taken into the country. My own health likewise suffered greatly. Though ordinarily infirm, yet during the four years immediately preceding my removal to St. John, I had not once been unable to discharge the duties of the Sabbath; but of late instances of this inability through sickness were of frequent occurrence.

The failure of my health probably proceeded from several causes. 1. Of the healthful exercise of riding, plentifully enjoyed in the country, I was principally deprived in the city; and walking did not supply its place. 2. Manual labor, which had been highly conducive to my health, may be said to have been prohibited. From a mistaken view, happily not so prevalent in these days, it was deemed derogatory to the character of a minister resident in a city to perform any work with his hands. It was considered unbecoming for me to draw a pail of water and take it into the house. A serious caution was administered to me to refrain from every thing of that kind. 3. The dense and long continued fogs, the miasma from the coves in hot weather when the tide was out. 4. The discharge of an important duty, namely, the visiting of the sick, was detrimental to my health. Much sickness prevailed in the city and suburbs during that summer. An instance is distinct in my recollection in which fourteen corpses were buried in one day. Though my constitution is not readily susceptible of contagious or infectious diseases, (as is evident from the fact that I have never taken the measles, though repeatedly exposed to them in all stages,) and none of the infectious fevers prevalent among the persons whom I visited in St. John was taken by me; yet the very offensive effluvia in many of the rooms of the sick, tended to impair my health. 5. The house in which we resided was in a low and unhealthy situation. 6. My health undoubtedly suffered from a cause now happily obviated, namely, the use of unwholesome water. A skillful medical adviser attributed a serious portion of my indisposition to this; and advised me not to drink any of the water in the city without having it previously boiled. This, however, gave it an insipid and unpleasant taste, which tended to produce nausea.

When my apprehensions of the necessity of my removal were made known, brothers, sisters, and friends expressed much regret, and strong reluctance to it. A Committee was appointed by the Church to confer with me, on the subject, and to adopt sanitary measures for our benefit. It was kindly proposed to obtain a house, or rooms, for us in a more healthy locality, and to defray the additional expense. A place was selected which appeared favorable. In the event, however, of this being effected, it was required that we should absolutely engage to remain. Though ardently attached to the Church and people, and unwilling to leave them, yet, as this change could remove only one of the causes of our sickness, it did not then appear to me—nor does it now—as duty, nor indeed as justifiable, to promise to remain where there was a strong probability of continued illness, and inability to labor for Christ and souls, with a prospect of speedy dissolution; while a return to the country might be reasonably expected, by the Divine blessing, to secure the continuance of life, restoration to health, and consequently opportunity to labor still in the Lord's vineyard. The only prudent course, therefore, open before me seemed to be, to remain in the city for the present, to employ the best means within my reach for the recovery and preservation of health, and to proceed ultimately in accordance with the apparent dictates of Providence.