

PROCESS OF DYING.

[The following is from an article in the last London Quarterly.]

The pain of dying must be distinguished from the pain of the previous disease, for when life ebbs sensibility declines. As death is the final extinction of corporal feelings, so numbness increases as death comes on. The prostration of disease, like healthful fatigue, engenders a growing stupor—a sensation of subsiding softly into a coveted repose. The transition resembles what may be seen in those lofty mountains, whose sides exhibiting every climate in regular gradation, vegetation luxuriates at their base, and dwindles in the approach to the regions of snow till its feeblest manifestation is repressed by the cold. The so-called agony can never be more formidable than when the brain is the last to go, and the mind preserves to the end a rational cognizance of the state of the body. Yet persons thus situated commonly attest that there are few things in life less painful than the close. "If I had strength enough to hold a pen," said William Hunter, "I would write how easy and delightful it is to die." "If this be dying," said the niece of Newton of Olney, "it is a pleasant thing to die;" "the very expression," adds her uncle, "which another friend of mine made use of on her death-bed a few years ago." The same words have so often been uttered under similar circumstances, that we could fill pages with instances which are only varied by the name of the speaker. "If this be dying," said Lady Glenorchy, "it is the easiest thing imaginable." "I thought that dying had been more difficult," said Louis XIV. "I did not suppose it was sweet to die," said Francis Suarez, the Spanish theologian. An agreeable surprise was the prevailing sentiment with them all; they expected the stream to terminate in the dash of the torrent, and they found it was losing itself in the gentlest current. The whole of the faculties seem some times concentrated on the placid enjoyment. The day Arthur Murphy died he kept repeating from Pope,

"Taught half by reason, half by mere decay,
To welcome death, and calmly pass away."

Nor does the calm partake of the sensitiveness of sickness. There was a swell in the sea the day Collingwood breathed his last upon the element which had been the scene of his glory. Captain Thomas expressed a fear that he was disturbed by the tossing of the ship: "No, Thomas," he replied; "I am now in a state in which nothing in this world can disturb me more, I am dying: and I am sure it must be consolatory to you, and all who love me, to see how comfortably I am coming to my end."

A second and common condition of the dying is to be lost to themselves and all around them in utter unconsciousness. Countenance & gestures might in many cases suggest that, however dead to the external world, an interior sensibility still remained. But we have the evidence of those whom disease has left at the eleventh hour, that while their supposed sufferings were pitied by their friends, existence was a blank. Montaigne, when stunned by a fall from his horse, tore open his doublet; but he was entirely senseless, and only knew afterwards that he had done it from the information of his attendants. The delirium of fever is distressing to witness, but the victim wakes from it as from a heavy sleep, totally ignorant that he has passed days and nights tossing wearily and talking wildly. Perceptions which occupied the entire man could hardly be obliterated in the instant of recovery; or, if any one were inclined to adopt the solution, there is yet a proof that the callousness is real, in the unflinching manner in which bed-sores are rolled upon, that are too tender to bear touching when sense is restored. Wherever there is insensibility, virtual death precedes death itself, and to die is to awake in another world.

The Greatest Want.

No man in the world want help like them who want the Gospel. Of all distresses, want of the Gospel cries loudest for relief. A man may want liberty, and yet be happy, as Joseph was; a man may want peace, and yet be happy, as David was; a man may want plenty, and yet be full of comfort, as Micaiah was; but he that wants the Gospel wants everything that should do him good. A throne without the Gospel is but the devil's dungeon; wealth without the Gospel is fuel for hell; advancement without the Gospel is but going high to have the greater fall. What do men need that want the Gospel? They want Jesus Christ, for he is revealed only by the Gospel. He is all and in all, and where he is wanting

there can be no good. Hunger cannot truly be satisfied without manna, the bread of life, which is Jesus Christ; and what shall a hungry man do that hath no bread? Thirst cannot be quenched without a living spring, which is Jesus Christ; and what shall a thirsty soul do without water? A captive as we all are, cannot be delivered without redemption, which is Jesus Christ; and what shall the prisoner do without his ransom? Fools, as we all are, cannot be instructed without wisdom, which is Jesus Christ; without him we perish in our folly. All building without him is on the sand, and will surely fall. All working without him is in the fire, where it will be consumed. All riches without him have wings, and will fly away. A dungeon with Christ is a throne, and a throne without Christ is a hell. Nothing is so ill, but Christ will compensate. All mercies without Christ are bitter, and every cup is sweet that is seasoned with but a drop of his blood; he is truly the love and delight of the sons of men. He is the Way; men without him are Cains, murderers and vagabonds. He is the Truth; men without him are liars, like the devil who was so of old. He is the Life; men without him are dead, dead in trespasses and sins. He is the Light; men without him are in darkness, and go they know not whither. He is the Vine; those that are not grafted in him are withered branches, prepared for the fire. He is the Rock; men not built on him are carried away with a flood. He is Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the author and the ender, the founder and the finisher of our salvation; he that hath not him hath neither beginning of good, nor shall have an end of misery. O blessed Jesus, how much better were it not to be, than to be without thee; never to be born, than not to die in thee. A thousand hells come short of this,—eternally to want Jesus, as men do who want the Gospel. They want all holy communion, with God, wherein the only happiness of the soul doth consist. Without him, the soul in the body is a dead soul in a living sepulchre.—They want all the ordinances of God, the joy of our hearts, and the comfort of our souls.—O the sweetness of a Sabbath! the heavenly raptures of prayer! O the glorious communion of saints, which such men are deprived of! If they knew the value of the hidden pearl, and these things were to be purchased what would such poor souls not part with for them? They will at last want heaven and salvation; they shall never come into the presence of God in glory, never inhabit a glorious mansion. They shall never behold Jesus Christ but when they shall call for rocks and mountains to fall on them and to hide them from his presence. They shall want light in utter darkness; they shall want life under the second death; want refreshment in the midst of flames; want healing under the gnawing of conscience; want grace, continuing to blaspheme; want glory in full misery; and, which is the sum of all, they shall want an end of all this: for "their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched."—*Dr. John Owen's Sermon before the English Parliament in 1646.*

May 1 Pray.

During the summer of 1842, a church in Pennsylvania set apart a day for fasting and prayer. Among those in attendance was a little girl of the Sunday-school, about ten years of age. Her parents were both unconverted, seldom or never went to the house of God, and her father in particular was a very hardened sinner. During the exercises of the afternoon, her little heart became deeply affected. She returned home in deep sorrow, meditating what she should do. Her mother was there. In sadness and in silence the daughter took her seat. No one spoke. Her heart trembled, yet she must disclose her feelings. "Ma, may I pray?" broke the silence. The prayerless mother stood reproved, and, overwhelmed with guilt, replied, "Yes, my child, you may pray, and I will try to pray too." They bowed in prayer. Now mother and daughter were seen together in the house of God, and in the inquiry meeting. Having sought and found the Saviour, they delighted in the house of prayer and the means of grace. But the husband and father was hardened in sin. He raved and raged, because his wife and daughter were so much at meeting. He threatened to whip his child, and lock his wife out of the house, if they did not desist from their attendance upon divine worship.

But, sustained by grace, they pressed forward. Often did the daughter request her teacher to pray for her "poor father." The father grew more and more desperate, till he

reached the end of his line, and then God brought him to his right mind. Early one Saturday morning, he and his praying wife came to the pastor's house. "Mr. —, do you think there is any mercy for such a sinner as I?" was his first inquiry. "What have you done?" "I have abused my wife and child, when I knew they were right. I have cursed the church, and attempted to drown my sorrows by drink. Is there mercy for me?" He was pointed to Jesus, encouraged by the cases of Saul and the dying thief, and commended to God in prayer. But he returned with a heavy heart. He went to his room, and there continued to read his Bible and pray till, just as the sun was throwing his last rays upon the earth, he bowed before God as if for the last time, and on the borders of despair he cast his guilty soul on Christ. He arose joyous in God. He, his wife, and daughter,—the whole household,—were subsequently "buried with Christ by baptism," and went on their way rejoicing.

The father has fallen in death, but he felt no fear. The value of perseverance is here prominently seen. Had that child faltered, or had the mother and daughter yielded to the wishes of a wicked man, they and he, to all human appearance, might have been lost.—Let then those who have opposing relatives respectfully, yet firmly, persevere. Yield not an iota of what is right. It may cause temporary trouble, but God will take care of consequences; a worldly, time-serving policy, is offensive to God and ruinous to the souls of men. Obedience is right and safe.—*Watchman and Reflector.*

Divine Providence.

The doctrine of a particular and universal Providence, is strictly derivable from the very nature of God. We are so accustomed to reckon one thing great and another small, that when we ascend to contemplations of Deity, we are apt to forget that there is not to him that graduated scale which there must be to ourselves. It is to bring down God to the feebleness of our own estate, to suppose that what is great to us must be great to him, and that what is small to us must be small to him. I know, and am persuaded, that, dwelling as God does in inaccessible splendours, a world is to him an atom, an atom is to him a world. He can know nothing of the human distinctions between great and small—so that he is dishonoured, not when all things are reckoned as alike subject to his inspection, but when some things are deemed important enough, and others too insignificant, to come within the notice of his providence. If he concern himself with the fate of an empire, but not with the fall of a sparrow, he must be a being scarce removed from equality with ourselves; for, if he have precisely the same scale by which to estimate importance, the range of his intelligence can be little wider than that of our own. God is that mysterious being to whom the only great is himself. And, therefore, when "the eyes of all wait upon" him, the seraph gains not attention by his gaze of fire, and the insect loses it not through the feebleness of vision. Archangel, and angel, and man, and beast, and fowl of the air, and fish of the sea, all draw equally the regards of him, who, counting nothing great but himself the Creator, can pass over, as small, no fraction of the creature. It is thus virtually the property of God, that he should care for every thing, and sustain everything; so that we should never behold a blade of grass springing up from the earth, nor hear a bird warble its wild music, nor see an infant slumber on its mother's breast, without a warm memory that it is through God, as a God of providence, that the fields are enamelled in due season, that every animated tribe receives its sustenance, and that the successive generations of mankind arise, and flourish, and possess the earth.—And never should we think of joy or sorrow, of things prosperous or adverse, of health or sickness, life or death, without devoutly believing the times of every man are in the Almighty's hands; that nothing happens but through the ordinance or permission of God; and that the very same Providence which guides the march of stars, and regulates the convulsions of empires, is tending at the couch of the afflicted, curtaining the sleep, and watching the toil, of the earth's remotest families.

Weeping Compassion.

The Rev. Albert Barnes, in closing a discourse on revivals of religion, uses the following impressive language in illustration of the

Divine compassion for the souls of ruined and perishing men:

A heathen monarch once rose up from his throne, and covered himself with sackcloth, and was followed by his court and nobles, and by all the people, in a solemn fast for three days. Who adjudges that the bosom of the king of Nineveh in this way was swayed by an improper feeling? Another heathen monarch, at the head of two millions of men, sat down and wept. In a hundred years, said he, all that mighty host will be dead. The vision of Xerxes extended no further. He had no tear to shed over their doom beyond the grave.—How different that feeling from the view which excited our Redeemer to weep! His tears fell because he could see beyond the tomb; because he saw the unending career of the never-dying soul; and knew what it was if the soul should be lost. And this multitude that we see in this city; this gay, busy, thoughtless, volatile, unthinking throng that sweep along these streets, or dwell in these palaces, or that crowd these theatres or these assembly-rooms, oh where, will they be in a hundred years? Dead; all dead. Every eye will have lost its lustre; every frame its vigor; every rose shall have faded from the cheek; the charms of music shall no more entrance the ear; the fingers shall have forgotten the melody of the lute and the organ. Where will they be? In yonder heaven, or in yonder hell. Part, alas; how small a part! with ears attuned to sweeter sounds, and with eyes radiant with immortal brilliancy, and with a frame braced with the vigor of never-dying youth. Part, alas! how large a part! in that world, a view of whose unutterable sufferings drew tears from the eyes of the Son of God! Each man that dares to curse Jehovah on his throne; each victim of intemperance and lust; each wretch on which the eye fastens in the lowest form of humanity, has an immortal nature that shall live beyond the stars, and that shall survive when "the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll!" The shadowy vale of death will soon be past, and the thoughtless and guilty throngs will be found amid the severe and awful scenes of eternal justice! Christian, pray, pray, oh pray, for a revival of pure religion in the guilty cities of our land.

Grieve not the Spirit.

I had in my room a beautiful and delicate flower. Day after day I cherished it, watching its growth till I rejoiced to see it put forth a blossom. One morning in my hurry I neglected to water it. The day was sultry and breathed its hot breath upon the neglected flower. When I returned from a journey, I looked upon my little favorite, and found it withering and drooping. I hastened in the evening to remedy the error of the morning, but in vain. It had been fatal, and no care could arrest the work of destruction. It was scorched and dead. Like this flower is the work of the Spirit in the soul. It must be tenderly and constantly cherished, or it will droop and die. Remember the plant, should you ever be tempted to neglect the duties of the closet.

Retort.

It is related of the late Dr. John Breckinridge, that he was once present at a dinner party, where one of the gentlemen, who was late, gave as his apology that his wife could not be hastened, that she was one of those *old-fashioned bigoted* Christians who believed that "whatever is to be will be." The Doctor very blandly replied, "I suppose we are to infer from your charge upon your wife, sir, that you are one of those *modern, liberal-minded* Christians, who believe whatever is to be will not be; or at least that some things that are to be will not be." Which horn of the dilemma the gentleman chose has not transpired.

Purgatory.

An Italian noble being at church one day, and finding a priest who begged for the souls in purgatory, gave him a piece of gold.

"Ah! my lord," said the good father, "you have now delivered a soul."

The count threw upon the plate another piece.

"Here is another soul delivered," said the priest.

"Are you positive of it?" inquired the count.

"Yes, my lord," replied the priest; "I am certain they are now in heaven."

"Then," said the count, "I'll take back my money, for it signifies nothing to you now seeing that the souls have already got to heaven, there can be no danger of their returning to purgatory."