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ELSPETE SUTHERLAND.

ELSPETH SUTHERLAND;

OR,

THE EFFECTS OF FAITH.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“THE MILITARY BLACKSMITH,” ETC.

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

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PREFACE.

THERE seems a strong propensity in the human mind, to consider affliction as a proof of the displeasure of Almighty God. This painful idea, added to the depressing effects of that long continued trial which true believers often suffer, tends to diminish their confidence, and make them live below the privileges of a Christian. The Scriptures teach us, that “whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth,”—that we must neither despise the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when we are rebuked of Him,—that “if we are without chastisement, then we are not sons.” Affliction, presented thus to the view of a Christian, assumes a new aspect. Should the following account of one struggling under poverty and

weakness, lead any in a similar situation to press forward to those higher degrees of faith and confidence in God which she attained, the wishes of the writer will be fully answered.

The quotation, and some of the ideas in the last conversation, are taken from Dr Owen's work on the Glory of Christ.

ELSPETH SUTHERLAND;

OR,

THE EFFECTS OF FAITH.

IN a room at the top of a long stair, in the Canon-gate of Edinburgh, lived ELSPETH SUTHERLAND. Early in life she had been left an orphan. Her birth-place was in the north of Scotland; and immediately after the death of her last surviving parent, she was taken into the service of the minister of the parish in which they had resided. She was found by Mr Mitchell's family so faithful and attached as a servant, that, on his being removed to a church in Edinburgh, Elspeth accompanied them, and remained with the family till after the death of her master. During these years of service, she had attached herself too warmly to the whole family to think of quitting them, when their altered circumstances and diminished income rendered her particularly useful; but a severe fever, from which she never entirely recovered, obliged her to quit this service, and maintain herself by needle-work. Year after year she followed her laborious occupation, and drew from it the means

of a scanty support. With this, however, she was contented, for her rent was always ready on the day appointed for payment, and that she rejoiced in with all the warmth of a truly independent spirit. In the corner of the same chest in which her precious Bible was kept, the necessary sum was carefully hoarded. While she had health and strength, she faithfully obeyed the precept,—to “owe no man any thing, but to love one another.”

She had also a neat clean suit for the Sabbath days ; her gown had been her mother's, and the black silk bonnet was never put on but on that day. Thus arrayed, with her Bible in her pocket-handkerchief, she went to church, and there her soul was refreshed by the word of life. Poor Elspeth, forgotten and unknown by *all*, heard that not a sparrow falleth to the ground without the knowledge of her heavenly Father,—that He “loveth them that hope in His mercy.”

Her religion was warm, and her heart devoted to the service of God. While thus spending her week in industry, her soul was often engaged in prayer ; she earnestly desired to maintain a conscience void of offence towards God and man, while she trusted only in the finished work of Christ for her acceptance with God. But Elspeth had other lessons to learn, and she was to be led much further on in that path which is peace, and in the knowledge of that God who is love.

Elspeth gradually sunk into a state of feebleness and debility that rendered exertion painful ; her sleep was disturbed by rheumatism ; and her industry must be doubled, to make up for her slowness. First, she sat up an hour later, then she gave up one meal in

the day ; still, when the day came that the rent was to be paid, she had not the sum needful,—five shillings were wanting. Elspeth slept none that night. She endeavoured to bring her mind to acquiesce in what she felt was not the result of either her idleness or extravagance,—she could look up to God,—she could appeal to Him who searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins, that He knew that she had desired most earnestly to give all their due ; still her proud heart rose in rebellion against His will,—she felt as if she *could* not trust in God,—in truth she hardly *wished* to trust Him with the future. How was she to meet her landlord ? She well knew he was often deceived by those who rented his houses. He was naturally harsh, and what is called a hard man. Would he believe her ? Tormented by these fears, she could hardly walk, when she set out to tell her piteous tale to the proprietor of her house. On her way down stairs, she met the wife of an old soldier, who lived in the same house with herself. She knew her well by character. Her husband and she spent the pension he received from Government in drinking and in profusion ; and when it was done, without shame or remorse, they both begged from the charitable, and on the term-day they never had their rent ready. Anxious to be exact with her landlord on the day of payment,—still suspecting on what errand her neighbour would be going, Elspeth thought of inquiring where neighbour Macallum was going so early.

Neighbour.—“ To our landlord, to tell him that we cannot pay our rent till we get our pension, and that he must trust us till then.”

Eppy.—“Have you not told him that often before?”

Neighbour.—“He has plenty, and it is a shame to scrape off poor folks.”

Eppy.—“O! neighbour, you do not know what being poor is. And what would come of our landlord, if every one did as you do? He must live too.”

Neighbour.—“Come of him! he has plenty, and likes to grind the faces of the poor.”

Eppy.—“It is you, neighbour, that grinds the faces of the poor, by your impositions.”

Neighbour.—“What way? I am one of them myself.”

Eppy.—“You would not be so if you lived honestly and soberly. The rich are so often imposed on by the like of you, that they shut their hearts to all the stories that are told them, and, without inquiry, refuse the assistance that is asked, often when it is really required.”

Neighbour.—“That is because they like to spend their money on their own luxuries.”

Eppy.—“I do not deny that such is the case with many of them, but it is not so with *all*; and one poor person among us, that constantly imposes upon those who are willing to give for the relief of their poorer brethren, does them more real harm than all the luxuries of the selfish rich.”

Neighbour.—“Well done! how can that be?”

Eppy.—“Why, do not all their luxuries supply us with work? Whereas the deceit and imposition that is too often practised by the beggars that swarm in the streets, and write letters to the different gentry who they suppose will give, awakens a feeling of distrust in their minds; which distrust, mixing itself

with the natural indolence of their hearts, makes them say, it is easier to give nothing in private charity, we are so often deceived; we will give all we intend to bestow, to the public institutions for the relief of the poor. In this way, the rich by degrees give far less than if their hearts were touched by the sight of distress; and, in fact, it is only the poor, like you, that willingly apply for public relief,—some of us would far rather go to bed cold and hungry.”

Neighbour.—“The more fool you; I do not care where it is to be had, if I but get what is comfortable.”

Eppy.—“Well, neighbour, I am far poorer than you, but I would not change with you. You live as if this world was to last for ever, and forget both how short and uncertain it is, and that ‘after death cometh the judgment.’ You care not by what means you get your wants supplied, but I will trust in God, and keep His commandments.”

Neighbour.—“Well, good-by; you may follow your road, I will follow mine; I like a good warm supper better than any sermon, so I must go to our landlord, or he will be out.”

Elsbeth, with a heart ready to break, turned from her. She could not go to her landlord,—she could not expect him to believe her,—and besides that, what had she to say? Would she be able to pay him, without assistance, at any future period? Where could she turn? All the family of her former dear master had been dispersed. Some of them had followed him to the grave, the others were she knew not where. She endeavoured to look up to heaven with trust and confidence. She had often felt the comfort

of relying on the promises of Scripture, but at this trying moment she was oppressed with anxiety; her heart was dark and cold,—she felt as if God had forsaken her. She turned slowly to go home, when she remembered a lady in the New Town, who had often given her work, and she determined to tell her distress to her, and see if she would assist her. This new idea gave her courage, and she turned her steps towards Mrs Douglas's house. With a trembling hand she knocked at the area door. A servant answered, and in a sulky tone inquired what she wanted. Elspeth asked whether Mrs Douglas was at home.

“She is engaged with company; what do you want of her?” was the answer.

Eppy.—“I can wait; I must speak to herself.”

Servant.—“Well, wait then; but so many come to my mistress, that she is determined to give nothing, without first inquiring into the character of the person she gives to.”

Elspeth was taken into the kitchen. The smell of dinner was too strong for her half empty stomach. The cook gave her some broken meat,—her heart filled. It was given as charity,—she was looked upon as a common beggar. When the morning visitor had quitted Mrs Douglas, the servant told her that a poor woman wanted to speak to her. Mrs Douglas inquired who she was, and sent her word to leave her address carefully, and that all proper inquiries should be made regarding her; but till that was done, she could give her nothing.

Upon getting this message, Elspeth rose to go without saying one word; she was truly comfortless and oppressed; where could she turn for aid? The

servant inquired where she lived. She told him, without feeling any hope that assistance would follow, and then turned her feeble steps towards her own cold and dreary abode. The short sight she had had of a warm and full kitchen, made her feel it still *colder* and more *comfortless*. She threw herself on her miserable bed, and wept bitterly for a considerable time. Did God mean to forsake her? Was she now to be obliged to beg her bread, and to meet with all the suspicion and contempt of those who confounded her with beggars, who followed that mode of living more from choice than necessity?

That night was spent by Elspeth in mental agony. Her heart rose in secret rebellion against God; she almost for a moment envied her neighbour, who could cheat and lie without remorse, and made easy gain of those richer than herself. She did "fret herself because of evil-doers, and did envy them." This was the state she was still in next forenoon about eleven o'clock, when a gentle knock at the door roused her; and when, on opening it, she saw Mrs Douglas, a ray of hope and comfort cheered her, and she let her in with pleasure. Mrs Douglas inquired most kindly how she was, and what she had wanted of her the day before, saying that she had not recollected her name, when the servant mentioned her being below. Eppy at first could not answer, conscious of the hard thoughts she had entertained of her God; her heart smote her, and kept her silent.

Mrs Douglas.—"Eppy, tell me what is your situation. I have long known you to be frugal and industrious, so that if any unforeseen distress afflicts you, I shall be happy to help you."

Eppy.—“O! I am an unworthy, unthankful creature. God has always supplied my wants, but I cannot trust Him.”

Mrs Douglas.—“What has happened to you?”

Eppy, with many bitter feelings of shame and reluctance, then related how she was unable to pay her rent, and that she durst not expect her landlord to believe her more than others. *Mrs Douglas* first put the five shillings into her hand, then inquired more fully into her wants; but it was long before she got at her history, for *Eppy*, looking at the money in her still open hand, began by saying, “I see how it is; I think that I have faith in God, but I can only trust Him when I *see* all before me. I almost envied the sinful creature that supplied her wants by lies. I forgot that ‘the Lord reigns, let the people rejoice;’ and O! I forgot the words of my Saviour, that ‘if God so clothe the grass of the field, that to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore, take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed?’ I am a self-deceiver; ‘Lord have mercy on me!’” Poor *Eppy* wept, and *Mrs Douglas* felt too much respect for the workings of conviction, to interrupt her for a considerable time. At length she gently inquired, whether she had been greatly discouraged by not being able to pay her rent?

Eppy.—“Yes, madam, these six months I have been working hard for it; but I am grown very weak, and from rheumatism I cannot work as I did: this hand (showing the right hand) is quite stiff, and often very painful—besides that, so many try it now; but

I see how it must be, and I feel I deserve it, I am sinful dust and ashes."

Mrs Douglas.—"What makes you so very unwilling to receive assistance, when you cannot by your exertions support yourself?"

Eppy.—"Madam, if you knew as much of the poor that beg as I do, you would not wonder that I do not wish to be one of them."

Mrs Douglas.—"But, Eppy, there are dangers on the *right* hand, as well as on the *left*, and it is not submission to the will of God, if that will is the same as your own, is it?"

Eppy.—"No, madam; but the Bible says, we must 'owe no man any thing.' 'He that provideth not for his own house, is worse than an infidel.'"

Mrs Douglas.—"True, Eppy, and hitherto these texts have applied to you; but if God deprives you of your former strength, lays pain and suffering upon you, what is your duty?"

Eppy, (thoughtfully.)—"Submission."

Mrs Douglas.—"You must then *suffer* the will of God; and it is more difficult, believe me, than to *do it*; but if your soul is truly exercised by this trial, you will find that it will lead to *deeper* knowledge of your own heart, and to *higher* views of the *faithfulness* and *sufficiency* of God."

Eppy continued silent. Mrs Douglas offered to read a portion of the Bible to her. She chose the history of John the Baptist, and followed it up in all the different parts of Scripture, from the period of his being sent to call a nation to repentance,—honoured, as being the forerunner of his Lord and Master,—appointed to baptize Him,—present when

the heavens opened, and a voice from heaven said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Then she turned to the end of his life, to his being imprisoned for his bold censure of the sinful conduct of that very king who had so felt the force of his preaching, that he had heard him gladly, and done many things in consequence of it. In prison he was left neglected, unknown; when he sent his disciples to his Divine Master, saying, "Art thou *he* that should come, or look we for another?" not *one* worldly promise was given him. The disciples were only desired to tell John of those proofs of Christ's *power* and *mercy*, which should confirm and strengthen his staggering and fainting faith, though our Saviour at the same moment said, that "among those that were born of women, there was not a greater prophet than John the Baptist."

After that, he was secretly beheaded, his body buried by his disciples, and he is no more heard of,—he had passed away like a voice.—He had been employed to warn men,—his work was over. Such is the discipline of God, who knows what is in man, to his most favoured servants. This is not their rest,—their home. They must here do their duty as an hireling,—in heaven is their reward,—God is their portion.

After giving Elspeth some further assistance, Mrs Douglas rose and left her, without saying any thing more, trusting that the word of God would not return void, but would, by the powerful operation of the Spirit, accomplish that faith in Elspeth, which her situation so much required.

Long after Mrs Douglas was gone, Elspeth was

seated in the same place, with one hand on the still open Bible that lay before her. Her ideas crowded fast upon each other, and it was a considerable time before they were very distinct or collected. She in a little began to feel that she had hitherto served God with a very divided heart; her own good name and character with her neighbours, had held a first place in her heart,—she did pray earnestly to God,—she daily read His word,—she attended His house and ordinances,—she loved to hear of a Saviour, who for “our sakes became poor, that He might make many rich.” But to search her own heart *deeply*,—to desire that every idol might be torn from it,—to rely on the promises of Scripture *simply* and *firmly*, and to do so when every thing seemed against her, when her own sinfulness rose up between her soul and the free mercy of God in Christ; this she shrunk from as too high an attainment for a humble Christian like her,—she, in fact, hardly wished to attain it. After some time spent in deep thought and self-abasement, her ideas, the desires of her soul rose higher; she cast herself upon her Saviour, and said with comparative firmness, “Thy will, not mine, be done!” A spirit of prayer seemed poured upon her; she could spread her every desire before the Lord, and she felt that her *faith* was of a different character that night, from what it had ever been before.

The next morning, Elspeth rose refreshed, and with the sweet impression that the Lord had shown her a “token for good.” She went to pay her landlord with a grateful happy heart, and, at the same time, to take a smaller room from him, in the same house, at a lower rent. She determined to maintain

her independence by every means in her power, and then she trusted God would bless every trial He appointed for her. Indeed, at that moment she would not have called any thing trial; she had felt that there is no situation in which the soul can refuse to be comforted, when the earnest of those joys that are at God's right hand for evermore, are given to it, even for a *very* short time; and she now viewed trial as the means appointed by God to lead her to higher and sweeter communion with Himself. She could say with the Psalmist, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance."

This happy state of mind, though it left a lasting impression, did not continue without abatement. The daily exertion above what her strength could bear, and the many privations her situation called for, required much submission on the part of Elspeth, and her spirits again sunk, when, with all her exertion, she found she could not support herself. She saw the clouds gathering fast around her, till "the floods compassed her about, and the billows and waves passed over her."

In spite of much prayer for firm faith, she looked at the future with anxiety. One night it was getting late; she had no supper in the house; she did not know where the next meal was to come from. She knew that God *could* supply her wants; but whether she was to be another monument of His watchful providence, she felt a painful doubt. She was thinking of the ravens that fed the prophet Elijah, when a footstep on the stair, at that late hour, made

her start. She turned her head towards the door, and she saw Mr Miller, the minister in whose church she sat, come in. He had heard of her present situation, and, on his return from baptizing a parishioner's child, had called to offer her relief out of the collection at the church door for the poor.

Elsbeth felt this again reproach her want of confidence in God, at the same time that it confirmed her faith. She told her situation to the minister, with far less reluctance than she had done formerly to Mrs Douglas. She had found in her Bible, that the "poor should never cease out of the land." If such was the appointment of God, and if He saw that to be the right way to the "city of habitation" for her, she desired to have *her will* entirely conformed to *His will*,—to see His hand in every thing. Often had she implored the grace of God, that she might be enabled to cast her burden upon Christ, and to feel Him, by His Spirit, guiding and supporting her through this wilderness state.

Elsbeth's minister, after informing himself of her situation, offered her two shillings a week; but after raising her heart and eyes to God, and considering for a few moments, she positively refused to accept more than one shilling, saying that if her rent was paid, and a small sum for coals left, her own work could supply the rest.

Mr Miller.—"But your hand is so rheumatic, and you are so feeble, are you sure you can make that exertion?"

Eppy.—"Yes, sir; I cannot work as well, or as quick as I once could, but I dare not take what another may want more than I."

Mr Miller.—“ I approve of that, Eppy, but I fear that, with our most diligent inquiries, we often give where it is less needed.”

Eppy.—“ I fear you do, sir, but that is nothing to me ; it is by God, who knows the *truth*, that I am to be judged. Your collection is intended for the *necessities* of the poor : could I, therefore, *honestly* take more than is quite needful ? Oh, sir, it is sin that separates between God and our souls, and I dare not risk my soul's comfort for a small addition of this world's goods,—how soon could that be taken from me !”

Mr Miller.—“ Indeed you would make a poor exchange—but few Christians enjoy that holy confidence,—what has brought you to it ?”

Eppy.—“ Few enjoy it, because few desire it. They wish to be saved by Christ, and they keep up the use of appointed means, but they are content to remain on the very borders of the promised land. If any one tells them, that, as they advance farther, faith gets clearer, till almost perfect assurance is possessed, they consider this too high an attainment for a private Christian, though they do not by any means doubt, that some ministers and early Christians did enjoy it. But though they firmly believe that the residue of the Spirit is with God, and that it is not with *Him*, but in ourselves, that we are straitened, they will not set themselves in earnest to seek it, or to believe that God indeed willeth our sanctification, and that His command is to ‘rejoice in the Lord alway ; and again I say, Rejoice.’ ”

Mr Miller.—“ You are quite right, Eppy ; but by what means did you come to these opinions ?”

Eppy.—“ Oh ! sir, I know little of them yet,—a sinful heart learns slowly, and we as often harden ourselves against the chastisement of God, as we faint under His rebukes. We love to bear things in the stoutness of our own spirit, and to say, that nothing has befallen us but what is the common lot of man ; we, in this way, keep our souls at a distance from God. It is long before we learn that nothing (even sent us by God) does us any good till we realize it as a trial, and on our knees seek strength to bear it, as well as that it may be sanctified to us. But I am only beginning to see, that such is the religion of the Gospel, that this is living by faith. Till I was so far reduced, I had no idea of it. I did not wish to be wholly given up to God. Now, at least, *it is my desire*. Often the most fervent desire of my soul is to be *holy*, to have no will but that of God. ‘ Can two walk together, unless they be agreed ? ’ ”

Mr Miller.—“ Would to God, my good woman, we could all aim so high ; but alas ! here so many worldly cares—even duties, distract our thoughts. Though I trust I have not intruded myself into the office of the ministry, yet I feel I could learn with advantage from you, who have been longer in the school of Christ than I have.”

Eppy.—“ Oh ! sir, do not say so. But it is not these outward things that retard our progress, it is want of simple faith in the promised strength of Christ. While I could support myself, while I could say, there is my *rent*, there is the money I require for my *support*, my own hands have gained it, I only took the promises of God into the bargain ; now I

begin to know (though but very faintly), what it is to *live* upon them, to trust in the living God, and ‘to have no confidence in the flesh.’ Before this, I was like Gideon, I asked a sign. I said, like him, ‘If the Lord be with me, why then is all this befallen me?’ I as often *feared* as I *hoped*; but when every human prop was by degrees withdrawn, when all my gourds were withered, and the gathering distresses of my lot stared me in the face, then, sir, I think I have been in earnest led to trust in God, to feel my entire dependence. And I do, in some degree, receive the many precious promises with which Scripture abounds, in *faith*. I *feel* the everlasting arms underneath me; my heart is stayed upon God, and I am at peace. I would not be without one of the sad trying hours I have spent in this little room; they have led me to know God as He is manifested in Christ Jesus; and to know Him is bliss, such as this world never can give, and which none perhaps are acquainted with, till they have felt the vanity and the uncertainty of every human good, then they prize the Friend of sinners—the ‘Friend that sticketh closer than a brother.’”

After this conversation, Mr Miller left Elspeth, kindly promising to return and see her, and she quietly resumed her uniform, but oppressing life. Her Bible was her stay, and the more her heart shut to every earthly hope and pursuit, the more it opened to the enjoyment of communion with God. Still she lost none of her interest in her fellow-creatures, either when she could be of use to them, or when their distress called forth her sympathy. She was truly a follower of Him who wept at the grave of Lazarus;

and the more she got encouraged by the promises of God, and by the experience of the support that was imparted to her soul in every distress of her own, the more ready was she to weep with them that weep. The same spirit that enabled her, "in whatsoever state she was, therewith to be content," "to do *all* things through Christ strengthening her," made her *tender, gentle, feeling, and sympathizing*.

One only fear distressed Elspeth, and rose between her and the anticipated joys of heaven, and that was the fear of death. She could see the hand that had guided her through life, and done all things well for her here below, but her timid spirit shrunk from the dark valley of the shadow of death, which must be passed through before she could taste of those joys that are at "God's right hand for evermore." She felt there is something frightful to man in the cold, silent grave. She had never gazed on a corpse, on the cold inanimate clay, without feeling that there is nothing else like death. Often had she, in the silence of her chamber, endeavoured painfully to follow the disembodied spirit gone alone into a world so little known, and then sunk on her knees, to implore faith to commit this last care into the hands of Him who has tasted death for every man,—that she might be enabled to leave the *time, the circumstances, all*, in the hands of Him who has promised that He will not forsake the work of His own hands.

One evening, Elspeth was seated at her work, when Martha Macallum (a girl of about fifteen, and the daughter of the neighbour we have already mentioned) entered her room in tears. She begged leave to remain for a little while, saying, that there

were many people in her father's house; that they had been drinking; and that she was frightened to stay with them. Elspeth received her most kindly, and gave her a part of her frugal supper. The poor girl continued to weep bitterly, and at last exclaimed, "O Eppy! if you were my mother, what a change it would make; still, how often I have from my childhood laughed at you in your old-fashioned gown going to church, but now I see how it is."

Eppy.—"What do you mean, Matty, by seeing how it is?"

Martha.—"In our house we are miserable. We all torment and abuse one another. You seem always happy and in good humour; still you must often have a hard struggle; very often I wonder, when I look at you, what can be the reason of the difference, or how you can be so contented."

Eppy.—"Matty, you can read, and were long at a Sabbath-school were you not?"

Martha.—"Yes, for two years."

Eppy.—"Well, then, does not the Bible say, that this world is a wilderness, that it is a 'waste howling wilderness?' Do you believe it?"

Martha.—"If it means that it is not a happy place, I am sure we are not happy."

Eppy.—"Well, Matty, if you can feel that one part of the Bible is true from your own experience, do you not think that other parts may be true too?"

Martha.—"What do you mean? I do not understand you."

Eppy.—"Scripture says, that this world cannot satisfy us, or render us happy; it says that we are by nature wicked, born in a state of sin and misery;

but it at the same time says that Christ died to bear all the punishment due to guilty man, and to purchase an inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, for those that are by the Spirit born again, and made partakers of the benefits of His purchase; that their enlightened souls taste of a joy and peace in believing, that the world (or the unbelieving part of mankind) know nothing of. Now, Matty, if you feel that one part is *true*, why not suppose the other so too, and try to know it by the same experience?"

At this moment the voice of Martha's mother was heard on the stairs scolding, and calling for her daughter. Martha grew pale, and tried to hide herself; but her mother entered, and laying hold of her, inquired what she did idling there.

Elspeth tried to say something to soften her, but she broke out in the most abusive language, saying, that no doubt she would be trying to turn Matty against her parents,—that was all the good these over-righteous people did. Elspeth, seeing how much she was intoxicated, said no more; and, after much abuse, Mrs Macallum went off, dragging her unfortunate daughter with her.

Poor Elspeth, weak and timid, was much flurried by this scene, and could, with all her heart, have exclaimed with the Psalmist, "O that I had the wings of a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest. Lo! then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and the tempest." When she got more composed, she felt what deep gratitude she owed to God for not having left her in the same state of

wickedness as this neighbour. In the drunk and furious Mrs Macallum, she saw what she would have been, if left to herself, and if the *preventing* and the *converting* grace of God had not been granted to her soul. Her thoughts then dwelt upon the freeness of God's love, and that it was *sinners* Christ came to seek and to save: this led to earnest prayer for her neighbour, and prayer soon soothes the troubled mind. She also saw a feeling about Martha that interested her; she had made *one* step; she had discovered that her present course was not a happy one; and, young as she was, she had perceived that another, in outward circumstances far worse than those she witnessed at home, was happier. This was a great step, and might lead to more. As there is joy in heaven among the angels over one sinner that repenteth, so the redeemed of the Lord taste a joy and pure delight at the smallest hope of another poor child of Adam being turned from the service of Satan unto God, which sheds a sweetness over their pilgrimage here, and raises their soul to God with sentiments of gratitude and love.

Martha's home daily grew more uncomfortable. Her mother now drank to such a degree, that her whole appearance bore marks of it; and both her husband and she had so often asked charity from the benevolent, and they heard so very bad a character of them wherever they made any inquiries, that they could now only obtain a scanty pittance from the strangers that frequented Edinburgh, while, in fact, the state of their health was such, from the constant use of whisky, that they required assistance, and they could not have supported themselves by their own ex-

ertions. If poor Martha had much to bear before, she now had ten times more. Her worthless parents had indeed complied with the request of a lady, and permitted her to go to school, so that she could read and sew a little, but they had not trained her to any habits of regular industry. In this state of misery at home, and partly by the advice of Elspeth, she determined to offer herself as a servant at the next term; but while she was endeavouring to procure a place, her father, thinking that his profession of begging would be more lucrative where he was not known, left his wife and daughter in the night, and was never more heard of by them, though some of the neighbours reported that he had been taken up for robbery somewhere near Perth, and shortly afterwards executed.

After her husband had thus deserted her, Mrs Macallum refused to let Martha go to service; and Elspeth saw that her health was so bad, that she told Martha it was her duty to remain with her mother, and also to do what she could to support both. Martha attempted to do so by needle-work, but the difficulty was very great indeed; for not only had she to perfect herself in sewing, but also to contend with all her own habits of indolence and unsteadiness. Often would she have given up the attempt; but Elspeth knew so well how to encourage and animate her to perseverance, and Martha's young and warm heart glowed with so much pleasure when she praised her, at the same time that she assisted her by every means in her power, that she felt herself quite a different creature, and often said, with tears of gratitude, that Elspeth's kindness made her do far more than ever her mother's harshness had done. Elspeth often took

these moments, when Martha's heart overflowed with affection, to lead her thoughts to God; but *here* she found that heart—towards herself so warm—*cold* and *dead*. There was no feeling to answer Elspeth's, and the conversation languished and died away. Elspeth was pained and disappointed, for she hoped that Martha's lively mind and affectionate heart were opening to the subject of religion. She questioned her, and found that she knew the truth as it is in Jesus, as clearly as it can be known by the *head only*, while the heart continues unaffected by it. The efforts and instructions of her Sabbath-school teachers had laid the sacrifice ready, but the fire must descend from God before it could be lighted, and the flame of devotion rise to heaven. Elspeth ceased not to pray for her young friend to Him who can alone say to the dry bones, *Live*, and to warn her faithfully of her danger, at the same time that she told her when she was wrong in her conduct to her mother—for here Martha's difficulties were great.

Her mother was never pleased with her, and she was always trying to get drink by every means in her power. This worthless miserable woman was herself the very picture of discontent, while she poisoned the comfort of every one who came near her. She abused her neighbours who came to see her, and she abused them to Martha if they stayed away. Elspeth alone came pretty regularly, though Mrs Macallum hated her more heartily than any of her other neighbours; but Martha pled so perseveringly that she should come and try to keep her mother from drinking, that she could not refuse the affectionate daughter, though she felt her attempts were of no use.

One day, Elspeth went to tell Martha of a lady who used to employ her formerly, and who could give her some coarse work to do. Martha at that moment had neither money nor work, so she flew off, begging Elspeth to stay with her mother till she returned, as she would require her help to know how the work was to be done,—that she would not stay any time, but run all the way.

Mrs Macallum.—“That you will not. You are never the one to come quick back from an errand; you know that.”

Martha.—“Do I ever stay on my errands now, mother? that is not fair.”

Mrs Macallum.—“Are you going to give me the lie?”

Elspeth motioned to Matty to go away without answering, though herself half afraid to remain with this cross creature. After Martha was gone, Mrs Macallum and Elspeth were both silent for some time. At last, turning suddenly round, Mrs Macallum said, “So you have been preaching to Matty, that she may turn against her mother too, and think herself better than any one else.”

Eppy.—“What do you mean?”

Mrs Macallum.—“I am sure it was you made her so set upon going to church last Sabbath, and pretending it was her duty to go, and leave me alone, when I’ll be caution she was only going to meet her lad. She thought I would be so simple as to believe her, but I let her hear another story.”

Elspeth’s heart rejoiced to hear that Martha had been at church, and hoped it might be the effect of some dawning of conviction; but she only answered,

“If she was not at church, she should have been there, but I did not know she was going.”

Mrs Macallum.—“Do not deave me with your preaching.—I know children should obey their parents.”

Eppy.—“I know that too; but is it not their parents’ first duty to train them up in the fear of God?”

Mrs Macallum.—“I will train mine up to fear me; but I will have no more interference, so you may guide your own bairns.”

Elsbeth was silent, and Martha returned in a short time with the work; and after showing her carefully how it was to be done, Elspeth rose and left the house, with feelings of tender pity for Martha, and horror at the situation of her mother, whose broken health evidently showed that she could not live long, while she seemed at times to be tasting some of the torments of the condemned, though she had not yet passed that awful gulf from which there is no return.

Not long after this, Martha came to Elspeth in great distress. Her mother had discovered where the last money she had earned was hid; and with it she had procured spirits, and was at that moment in the most frightful state of intoxication; she did not know where to apply for more work, or for the next mouthful of food they would require. After various plans, many of which were given up as impossible, it was agreed that Martha should go and beg. She had often done so before without shame or reluctance, and had even felt an interest and amusement in telling a well-varnished tale of distress to move the pity of the passengers; but, now that Elspeth had animated

her to industry, there had come with it a feeling of independence, that rendered the present necessity very painful. She secretly determined with herself, not to tell an untruth. The fear of God had been excited in her, by seeing the constant faith in His power and government that reigned in Elspeth's mind.

Martha begged from several people who passed, but obtained nothing. She could only say, that "she had not tasted food that day, and that her mother could not work." She felt greatly tempted to add some moving circumstance to attract the attention of the passengers. At some distance from her, she saw a woman seated on a front stair, with a child in her arms; Martha watched her for some time. Several people stopped, and apparently gave her money; she drew near enough to hear what she said; and heard her tell of a husband killed in battle, a hard-hearted father who had never forgiven her for marrying without his consent, and left her (with several elder children, and the babe in her arms) without house or home, now that her soldier was in his cold grave. A young lady, leaning on the arm of an officer, listened to the recital with tears in her eyes, gave her all she had in her pocket, and desired her to call at her house that evening.

Martha knew the woman had no husband,—no child but the infant with her; and that she was a creature of the very worst character. Was there really an *all-wise*, an *all-powerful* God, who reigned over this scene of apparent confusion? She for a moment doubted it, and sat down, without knowing what to do. She was faint with hunger, and hope was nearly gone. A gentleman happened to pass

her; he looked at her,—she held out her hand in silence. He inquired, in a kind and gentle tone, what made so young a creature follow so bad a trade? Martha felt strongly tempted to tell a pathetic tale of woe, that would move the gentleman's pity, and induce him to give her something; but she still steadily resisted this temptation, and simply told that her mother could not work, and that she had not tasted food that day. The gentleman inquired where her mother lived; and on being told, said that he was going that way as a visiter for the Destitute Sick Society; that he would call upon her mother; and that, if she was deserving of it, she would obtain relief, without obliging her daughter to follow so bad a profession as that of a common beggar.

Martha rose quickly and cheerfully to show him the way, and now felt thankful that she had only told the truth. On the way she thought of Elspeth,—she knew she would say God had sent the gentleman to her support. Martha did not feel this happy confidence, but she liked to hear it expressed by another.

The gentleman and Martha walked silently on, till they reached the foot of Mrs Macallum's stair. Martha wished to run and tell her mother, and to put things a little in order; but the gentleman followed her closely, seeming to suspect her design. For a few moments after he left the cheerful light of the sun, and entered the dark abode of vice and misery, he could not see distinctly.

Martha entered, saying, "Here, mother, is a gentleman, who says he will help us."

Mrs Macallum raised herself in bed,—she was

newly awakened from the long sleep that had followed her fit of intoxication. The moment the gentleman could distinguish her features, he recognised her as one who had often imposed upon the public, and had (under various pretences) applied for aid to all the charitable institutions in the town.

He exclaimed, in a severe tone of voice, "And it is you for whom I have taken the trouble to come all this way,—not, however, to be again cheated, for not one farthing will I give you! Neither is there much use in my telling you once more, that there is a God who has power not only to kill the body, but to cast both body and soul into hell-fire. Think of what you deserve for training that girl to lie and cheat."

Martha had sunk upon an old broken chest during this speech, exhausted in body and despairing in mind. But Mrs Macallum, roused by this address, broke forth in protestations of the reality of her distress. "I assure you, sir, we have not tasted one mouthful since yesterday."

Gentleman.—"Did you not tell that same story about six months ago? and when we came to visit you, we found you here with a large company, and plenty of whisky, as well as food, upon the table."

Mrs Macallum.—"But, sir, times are changed since then; my husband has left me; he was a very bad man, and much I suffered from him."

Gentleman.—"But you *then* said in the streets that he was dead, and had left you a widow with seven young children,—as true a tale as your present one, I suppose. Do you think I would be right in giving you what might relieve the necessities of the virtuous poor,—of your neighbour, for instance, Elspeth

Sutherland? Remember that Scripture says,—‘I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread,’—and repent of your present sinful course, ere it be too late.”

At this speech Mrs Macallum lost all hope of obtaining any assistance from the stranger; and, stung to the quick by the mention of Elspeth Sutherland, she broke forth in terms of the most horrid abuse, calling her a hypocrite, who knew how to impose upon and flatter the gentles. The gentleman heard her in silence for a few moments, then left the room, and shut the door. Seeing him go, Mrs Macallum lost all command over herself. She abused Martha; said she had told the gentleman she had been drinking,—that to tell tales of her own mother, she called truth.

Martha remained in speechless agony, till, seeing her mother coming towards her with a look of fury, she rose in alarm to get out of the way, but in a moment was arrested, by seeing her fall in the middle of the floor in a fit. The unhappy girl flew to her, untied her cap, and loosed her handkerchief, but she still struggled; and the horrid glare of her eyes, the distortion of every feature, terrified Martha. She called for help as loud as she could. Several of her neighbours came to her assistance: but no human aid could now avail—the long-suffering patience of God was at an end—death was upon her, and her distorted features assumed all the rigid appearance of it. She still struggled painfully, but these struggles grew fainter and fainter. The neighbours said it would soon be over. Martha threw herself on her knees by her mother. She took her in her arms,—she

would have snatched her from death, and that awful world she was entering *for ever*. She felt how ineffectual her power was ; and, overcome by so many contending feelings, and with want of food, she sunk on the floor by her mother in a faint.

The rumour of all that had happened soon reached Elspeth. Trembling with horror, she came time enough to have poor Martha conveyed to her room. Two neighbours carried the young girl, and laid her on Elspeth's bed, then returned to see the dying agonies of the wretched mother, and to do the last duties to the body.

Elspeth knew that hunger was probably the cause of Martha fainting. She therefore warmed a little wine she had got from Mrs Douglas, and wet her lips with it, trying at the same time to pour some drops down her throat. In a few minutes she heard her heave a sigh, and by degrees she opened her eyes. Martha sat up, looked at Elspeth, then burst into tears, and wept and sobbed violently. Elspeth was thankful to see her tears flow, but trembled for her first question.

At last Martha said, "Eppy, why am I here ? what has happened ? where is my mother ?"

Eppy.—"Lie still, my dear child ; you have been too long without food ; eat this," said she, dipping a bit of bread in the wine, and holding it to Martha's mouth, who took it greedily. But with the support, her recollection of all that had passed returned, and she exclaimed, "Oh ! my poor mother is ill, very ill, —I thought her dying. Let me go to her," said she, attempting to rise.

Elspeth laid her hand gently upon her, and said,

“Matty, will you listen to me, and do all I desire you?”

Martha.—“O! yes, if you will tell me about my mother.”

Eppy.—“Well, let me go and see about her, but do you lie quiet; the will of God is all-wise, and it cannot be resisted.”

Martha got out of bed, saying, “Eppy, she is dead—my mother is gone! I remember when she grasped me so close!—I must go to her. My mother!—can it be? tell me all.” Martha struggled to free herself from Elspeth’s feeble hold, but she trembled so much that she again sunk on the bed. She exclaimed, “O Eppy, go to her, speak to her,—warn her to flee from the wrath to come,—speak to her as you have spoken to me.”

Elspeth laid her into bed, and then left her. She saw that the idea of her mother’s death had entered her mind, and she thought that a short time of hope would make the shock more gradual. She also wished to see that her neighbours had put all in decent order, that poor Martha might have no attending circumstances to increase her pain at the sight of her mother. Elspeth had hardly entered the room, when Martha, restless and anxious, followed her. What a scene presented itself to this unfortunate child! All around was dirt and confusion. The remains of the whisky was still on a chair near the bed, on which two neighbours had just extended the corpse of Mrs Macallum, cold and lifeless, but still bearing the expression of suffering and horror. Martha sunk on a chair. Elspeth let her remain some time, then took her gently by the hand, and led her back to her own

room. Martha now made no resistance,—she seemed hardly sensible of what she did. After she had been seated motionless in Elspeth's little room for a considerable time, Elspeth said to her, "Matty, my dear child, I will, if God permit, supply a mother's place to you. During my life, you shall not want the affection of one; and though I have not much in my power, my trust is in God: He will not forsake you."

These words of comfort brought the relief of a flood of tears to poor Martha. She threw her arms around Eppy's neck, and there wept; but soon again sunk into a kind of stupor;—her look was vacant, and she started when spoken to. Elspeth was very anxious all that day, though she saw, with comfort, that Martha was sensible of every care she took of her, and generally wept when she expressed any affection for her. The next day Martha was more composed, and at times seemed full of thought, though at others greatly overcome. Elspeth watched her with anxious tenderness, and trusted that the painful shock her young friend's mind had received would soon wear off. She knew that in early youth the feelings are warm and acute, but less lasting and deep than they are afterwards.

About a week after Martha had been with Elspeth, she said, "I must try and get some work; for," added she, bursting into tears, "I have not forgot. Eppy, that you said I might feel you as a mother; but I must not burden you."

Eppy.—"My child, do not speak of that; only remember God is the orphan's stay."

Martha.—"Gladly will I live with you, and do all you wish; but I cannot trust in God. He supported

me when I did not care whether I pleased Him or not, and I was utterly forsaken when I did fear God, and durst not tell a lie—and I saw that creature Nanny Brown getting plenty by her lies.”

Elsbeth was shocked at what Martha said, and drew from her the history of her attempt at begging, and all that had passed on that fearful day on which her mother died; when Martha told her how gladly she had shown the gentleman the way, and that she knew that she would say God had sent him; then dwelt upon all she had felt, when she had seen him turn away in anger from her mother, and upon the scene that followed.

Elsbeth understood the state of her mind, and said gently to her, “And so, Matty, you think this is a sure and certain proof that God is not to be depended on by His creatures, and that He does not overlook this scene of confusion with an eye of justice. Would you not have thought the same, had you seen Joseph thrown into prison by Potiphar, at the unjust accusation of a wicked woman, and left there two years? And you will remember this followed his brethren being permitted to oppress him, and sell him into Egypt. Do you suppose, for all this, that God did not love him, and watch over him?”

Martha.—“Perhaps He did, but I am not like Joseph; God meant him for great things.”

Elsbeth.—“Matty, not a sparrow falleth to the ground without the knowledge of God. Can He who formed all things not see and govern them, though we worms of a day may not be able to see it, and do often offend Him by our doubts and distrust?”

Martha.—“Do you then believe that God saw that

I was tempted to tell an untruth, and that for the first time in my life I resisted it, though almost dying with hunger?"

Eppy.—"I believe, Matty, that He saw every thought of your heart; and moreover, that to His grace alone you owe this mercy, that you for the first time did not obey the commands of Satan in preference to His holy law. Is not that cause of gratitude?"

Martha.—"Indeed it is: I feel that: but then, had it not been for you, I might have died of hunger, obeying the commands of God, when Nanny Brown was eating a comfortable supper, the fruit of her lies."

Eppy.—"And who sent me to your aid? and who put affection for you into my heart?"

Martha.—"Was that God too?"

Eppy.—"Most certainly it was. Take your Bible, Matty, and raise your thoughts to God by it. Does it any where promise the Christian earthly prosperity? It only says, that their bread and their water shall be sure. Have you ever really wanted either? And think on whom it has been bestowed. The moment you do not understand the dealings of God with you, your heart is full of doubts. You question even the existence of God; for to question that He rules all here below, is in fact to question His existence; and this you do at the very moment He is granting you His supporting grace."

Martha (thoughtfully). "I believe that in this I have sinned; but, Eppy, why did God give me more when I never thought of Him, than now when I do desire to serve Him" (in a very low voice), "and often pray to Him?"

Eppy.—“ May not God do what He will with His own, Matty? If there were two children, the one your own, that you loved as your own soul, the other to you an entire stranger, both bad in their tempers and inclinations, both going to ruin, how would you act? would you not take the one you loved under your own care? would you not instruct, correct, punish him? would not his faults vex you in a way those of the other would not?”

Martha.—“ No one has ever loved me in this world in the way you have done, and you are the only person who ever seemed vexed when I was wrong.”

Eppy.—“ Well, my dear Matty, that is just the way God acts towards His own dear children, after they are brought from the kingdom of Satan to that of God, after they have seen their danger and sin, and have ‘come unto the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness.’ He then rules and governs them by His Spirit, giving them light in their understanding, love in their affections, faith in all God’s promises, which are ‘yea and amen in Christ Jesus.’ It is all comprised in that one text of Job’s, ‘What is man that Thou shouldest magnify him? and that Thou shouldest set Thine heart upon him? and that Thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment?’”

Martha.—“ Do you then think that all this will do me any good, and make me better?”

Eppy.—“ Not of itself, Matty: affliction does the wicked no good; but those whose eyes are opened to see their state of sin and danger—to them who are God’s children by faith in Christ, it is numbered among those blessings of the covenant that God

made with Christ for them : ‘ Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son that He receiveth,’ and afterwards it ‘ yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness.’ Read the account of the saints of God; affliction fills up a large portion of their history; it is one of their resemblances to their dear Lord and Master—He was poor and despised, and had not where to lay His head.”

Martha.—“ Do you then think that God is drawing my heart to Himself?”

Eppy.—“ I hope, Matty, that you have been awakened to some fear of God, and that is the beginning of wisdom; but I am not sure that you have yet come unto Christ by faith. You tried to please God by not telling lies, and you thought He almost owed you a reward for thus obeying Him,—is not that the case?”

Martha.—“ Not quite, but I thought I was better than I had been.”

Eppy.—“ So you were; but if you are to stand in the sight of God in your *own righteousness*, nothing but a *perfect* righteousness will do, for ‘ God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,’ and ‘ all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.’”

Martha.—“ But I was taught, at the school, that ‘ Christ came to seek and to save those who were lost.’”

Eppy. “ That, Matty, is a precious text; but, till you feel that you need to be saved, do you think that you can come with any earnestness to Christ? till you feel that every look at yourself only fills you with hopeless despair, will you look *out* of yourself to Christ with a look of faith?”

Martha.—“But I believe in Christ.”

Eppy.—“My dear Matty, those who believe in Christ love Him,—we love God only because He first loved us. And can you love Christ without loving His service?”

Martha was silent and thoughtful. Elspeth proceeded with earnestness. “It is by prayer, by reading the Word of God, and by frequent thoughts of Him, that we come into His presence, that our souls draw near unto God. If you have no delight in these things, you cannot love God. Would I believe that you loved me if you fled from me, and avoided every opportunity of being with me?”

Martha.—“That is true; but, Eppy, it is only when something distressing happens to me in some of these dreadful times that I have spent with my poor mother, that I have ever had any thing to say to God: till then I always wearied when I tried to pray.”

Eppy.—“And does not that very wearying prove that your heart is still dead to God? If you felt your lost, undone state, would you weary of imploring God for that mercy which is freely offered in Christ? If you felt that repentance and hatred of sin which your catechism calls a saving grace, would you weary of imploring God to wash you in the peace-speaking blood of Christ? And if you felt all you owe Him for His watchful care, and His mercies, which are ‘new every morning,’ would you not feel pleasure in thanking Him for all His love?”

Martha.—“O Eppy, stop! I see that I am a sinner, and that, while I thought myself so much better than many others, and than I was myself formerly, because I have cured myself of some bad habits, and

done some things for my mother, I am in fact but a whited sepulchre ; all within is dead to God, and only alive to *self* and *sin*."

Elspeth put her arm gently around her, and drew her close to her, saying, "My dear Matty, pain is a proof of life,—the dead soul feels nothing. I trust your soul begins to live to God ; the leaven, though hardly perceptible at first, shall leaven the whole lump. But this has been too long a conversation for you ; you are still weak, so for the present think no more ; we must get you some work."

The difference between Elspeth's gentle and encouraging way, and the harsh temper of the mother she had lost, pressed painfully upon Martha's mind, and drew tears from her eyes, while gratitude for her present comfort glowed in her heart.

Elspeth went to consult Mrs Douglas about Martha, and to request that she would interest herself in procuring her a place in some pious family, where the religious impressions, which her mind seemed to have received, would be fostered. Mrs Douglas was much interested in this poor young girl, and thought it would be a great advantage to her to remain with Elspeth for a time, while her growing infirmities rendered it almost necessary she should have some one with her. Mrs Douglas did not, however, communicate these thoughts to Elspeth, till she should consider further of the possibility of carrying them into effect ; she only promised to do what she could for Martha, and to call at Elspeth's house in a few days.

After speaking to Mr Miller and some other friends, Mrs Douglas arranged that Martha should

remain with Elspeth during her life, supporting herself by needlework; and that, at Elspeth's death, either Mrs Douglas, or some of those friends who were equally interested with herself in Martha, should take her into their service.

When Mrs Douglas imparted to them the benevolent plan which she and her friends had formed, the joy of Martha exceeded all bounds of moderation;—she thanked Mrs Douglas—she drew close to Elspeth, and at last left the room, that her full heart might, in solitude, indulge in all the overflowings of gratitude. And Elspeth's joy and gratitude, though more chastened in its character, was hardly less ardent. She looked with wonder and adoration at the way in which all her wants had been supplied. Often had she been left without one mouthful of food in the house, but *always*, before the calls of nature rendered it needful, an over-ruling Providence had sent her some one to minister to her necessities. Grateful to the instrument, her heart now habitually rose above all means, to Him who ruleth *all* things, in heaven or in earth; and in addition to these mercies, she now felt all the pleasure Martha's society and assistance would afford her.

Some time after this arrangement, so mutually agreeable to Elspeth and Martha, had been made, Elspeth's distressing weakness, and her growing infirmities, made her think, that, though the approaches of death were as yet gentle, they were probably sure. Her anxiety to impress Martha with the importance of religion, increased in proportion to the idea that her time *here below* would probably be short. She showed her from Scripture, that faith must be a *liv-*

ing operative principle; for that “without holiness no one shall see the Lord.” She was thus fulfilling her daily round of duty, unknown to man, as one of the “Lord’s hidden ones,” when Mr Miller came to see her. Observing the glow of heavenly calm and peace that animated her pale countenance, he held out his hand kindly, and said, “Well, Eppy, how are you to-day? I rather think your soul rejoices in God your Saviour, from the calm of your expression.”

Elspeth.—“I am well, thank you kindly, sir, at least as well as I desire to be. This earthly frame decayeth, but the inward man is renewed day by day. I have no cause to complain, and think I have little now to do but to die.”

Mr Miller.—“Are your thoughts very often employed on that subject? and is the valley of the shadow of death very dark to you?”

Elspeth.—“It has been so, sir; but now I can cast that care, as well as every other, upon Him who careth for me. I am *willing* to depart and to be with Christ; I wish to be able to say with St Paul, *I long to depart*; but, perhaps, when the appointed hour comes, the desire will be given—every fear is removed.”

Mr Miller.—“Tell me, Elspeth, what has thus loosened the bondage of the fear of death? Has your soul long and deeply struggled with it?”

Elspeth.—“I do not know, sir, that I have ever known that hard bondage through fear of death that many have done. But often, even in health and strength, the thought of death has pressed upon me for a considerable time at once. It is accompanied

with some degree of fear, and led to prayer and self-examination. In this way, I think the Lord then dealt *gently* with my soul for good."

Mr Miller.—"And is that all the fear you have ever felt for our last great adversary? I believe very few can say as much."

Elspeth.—"No, sir: that was when it was far off—when I only knew that it must be, but thought the time probably distant. The first time that death was brought near, by the feeling of serious illness, and the overwhelming weakness of my frame, I felt that there is a reluctance in our nature to lay down in the cold grave, to 'say to corruption, Thou art my father: to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister.' A mysterious dread at the idea of quitting all here, of our disembodied spirits going alone into *eternity!*—to a world so unknown, so awful, and that for ever—the idea of quitting all I had ever *seen, known, loved,* and *clung* to here below,—that, after the last moment's struggle in death, my poor trembling soul was instantly to find itself in the presence of a God of infinite holiness, as well as power; O, sir, the idea is awful and overpowering, and there is at times a clearness, a vividness in such feelings, during the silence of a long sleepless night, that, as it were, brings the soul into the felt presence of God, and makes it cry out, 'If I should say, Surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night is light about me.' Then indeed, 'He openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction.' But faith can dispel all this gloom.—Christ, who is formed in us the hope of glory, can so manifest Himself to us, that we feel, 'He will have a desire to the work of

His hands,'—that 'He will show us the path of life, that 'in His presence is fulness of joy; at His right hand there are pleasures for evermore.' Our blessed Lord left His soul in the hands of God, in the full assurance that it should suffer no evil in its state of separation, but should be brought again with His body unto a blessed resurrection and eternal glory. So Stephen resigned his soul, departing under violence, into the hands of Christ Himself. When he died, he said, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!' His earthly frame then fell asleep! What a gentle term is there used for death, and how often it is used in the Word of God!"

Mr Miller.—"And by what means have you, Eppy, obtained these clear and comfortable views and feelings?"

Elsbeth.—"My situation, sir, gives me much time for reflection; and I think I have perceived, that the hopes and comforts that will often satisfy a mind in the short intervals of busy active life, will not satisfy one who may feel the same idea pressing upon her for hours together. Till the soul is fully satisfied that it has an interest in Christ Jesus, there must be doubts and fears, however clearly the mind may understand the plan of salvation, and believe in Christ, 'who has conquered death, and Him that had the power of death; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, nailing it to the cross; and, after having passed through death, hath risen to eternal habitations of light and glory, and that where He is, His redeemed ones shall be also: Behold I and the children which God hath given me.' All this may be known, and still

the soul may fear that it is not among the number of the redeemed.”

Mr Miller.—“ And can you feel an assured hope of your acceptance with God ? ”

Elsbeth.—“ Darkness and want of comfort may cloud my soul, and I may feel no sensible joy, but ‘ He who has begun a good work in me, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.’ I am one of the flock,—I am a branch of the true vine—and, weak and unprofitable as I am, none shall be able to pluck me out of my Father’s hand. He that is for me, is greater than all those that can be against me. When my faith rests upon the divine nature and power of Christ, ‘ God manifest in the flesh,’ and the union between the *Head* and the *members*,—the *vine* and the *branches*,—*all fear* is gone. I see myself as safe (though still in this world of sin and sorrow) as those who have passed through this wilderness leaning on the arm of their beloved, and now behold His glory, ‘ and shall be like Him, for they shall see Him as He is.’ ”

Mr Miller.—“ But that hope, clear as it is, and full of comfort for eternity, will not dispel the dread of the pains of dissolution between the body and the soul, and of those attacks upon our faith that Satan is frequently permitted to make upon a death-bed, troubling the truest believers on their passage through the waters of Jordan.”

Elsbeth.—“ In answer to these fears, we have several promises in Scripture, and many of them arise from want of submission, and from want of a deep enough conviction that all our sufficiency is from God only. If we would silence every rebellious feeling, by the re-

collection that God knoweth what is best for us, that His will is infinitely holy, wise, and good, and meet every anxious fear and alarm, of either bodily or spiritual suffering, with thoughts of the goodness and mercy of God,—that He can carry us through it, even triumphantly above it,—by these means we should be enabled, in faith and trust, to resign the *time*, the *manner*, and all the *circumstances* of our death, habitually and cheerfully into the hands of Him that doth all things well. We should thus learn to die daily. Then, for us to live would be Christ, and to die gain,—Oh! what gain! When we awake, we shall be satisfied with His likeness!”—Elspeth remained silent for some moments, then added, in a softened, subdued tone of voice, “Besides that, sir, if we have long struggled with sin,—if we have often said, ‘O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’—we shall daily long more earnestly to be done with this constant struggle, to see this vile body buried in the grave,—sown in corruption, that it may be raised in incorruption.”

Mr Miller was touched and overcome, by the humble yet strong confidence in God which Elspeth expressed. It was some time before he could command his voice sufficiently to engage in prayer, or rather in thanksgiving, for the work of faith which had been accomplished in her soul. When their devotions were over, Mr Miller inquired kindly about Martha, and then left the house.

We will also leave Elspeth, merely adding, that, shortly after, she passed the valley of the shadow of death without one alarm. Death was swallowed up

in victory,—she fell asleep in Jesus,—and “when absent from the body, she was present with the Lord.”

Martha, while she mourned the loss of this attached friend, felt her regret was all selfish, and could not help contrasting her present sad feelings with the far more painful ones her mother's death had excited. Elspeth's death seemed to bring heaven near to her soul,—to raise her thoughts to that period, when she should also put off this mortal frame; and though she wept, and long felt the loss she had sustained, she did not sorrow as those that have no hope, but she earnestly prayed that she too might die the death of the righteous.

In Mrs Douglas, Martha found a kind and indulgent mistress. In after life she often looked back to the day when she thought God had forsaken her. She could say in truth,—“His thoughts are not as our thoughts, neither His ways as our ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His ways higher than our ways, and His thoughts than our thoughts.”

THE END.



