

A SERMON

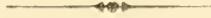
COMMEMORATIVE OF THE CHARACTER

AND LIFE OF

MISS MARGARET LATIMER:

PREACHED IN THE TENTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA,
ON SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 1865,

BY HENRY A. BOARDMAN, D. D.



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TO THE

M A N A G E R S O F

THE FEMALE ASSOCIATION,

THE PHILADELPHIA ORPHAN SOCIETY,

THE INDIGENT WIDOWS' AND SINGLE WOMEN'S
SOCIETY OF PHILADELPHIA,

THE FEMALE BIBLE SOCIETY OF PHILADELPHIA,

AND THE LADIES' COMMITTEE OF THE PENNSYLVANIA
INSTITUTION FOR THE DEAF AND DUMB;

THIS SERMON, PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST,

AND UNDER THEIR DIRECTION,

IS RESPECTFULLY

INSCRIBED.

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MARGARET LATIMER.

S E R M O N .

Acts ix. 36.

THIS WOMAN WAS FULL OF GOOD WORKS AND ALMS-DEEDS
WHICH SHE DID.

MANY of the personages mentioned in the Scriptures, especially in the New Testament, appear before us only for a moment and then vanish out of sight. They remain long enough, however, to suggest one of the probable reasons why they appear at all. They represent either some prevalent type of character, or some peculiar form of religious experience; and as such, stand for large classes to be reproduced in the future progress of the Church. Among the female characters thus brought to our notice, DORCAS claims a conspicuous place; a woman to whom we may, without irreverence, apply the salutation of the angel to the Virgin, "Blessed art thou among women!" For not only was she highly hon-

ored both of God and man in her own day, but the Church has embalmed her name in its heaven-born charities, and keeps it in “everlasting remembrance.”

Let us advert to her history. She was living, now some six or seven years after our Lord’s ascension, at Joppa, (the modern Jaffa,) a small town on the Mediterranean, and the seaport of Jerusalem, forty-five miles distant. Her name is given in two languages, a circumstance which has been thought to warrant the conjecture that it was descriptive of her appearance. *Tabitha* in Aramaic, derived from a verb signifying to *shine*, to *be splendid*, is the Old Testament name for the gazelle, that species of the antelope so celebrated for its beautiful eyes, its graceful form, and the fleetness of its step. This animal the Greeks call *δορκάς*, *dorcas*. Is it drawing too much upon the imagination to suppose that this true disciple was endowed with some personal qualities, of which this name was significant? If she had not been beautiful, as well in person as in character, would the Divine Spirit have laid so much stress upon her name?

It is further conjectured that she was a single woman—a maiden. Otherwise, it must be deemed strange that no reference is made to her family. In the other cases where a person is raised from the dead, there is special mention of their near kindred; as with the daughter of Jairus, the young man at Nain, and Lazarus. Here, there is nothing of the sort: DORCAS seems to have dwelt alone.

No life is so precious as to be exempt from death. If tears and intercessions might avail to avert the blow in any case, it must have been averted here. But this woman “was sick and died.” A sore stroke it was to that little society of believers at Joppa. But a great event has just happened in their neighborhood; and they take heart from it. At Lydda, a few miles across the plain from them, Peter has restored to health a poor paralytic, bed-ridden for eight years. Neither he nor any other apostle had ever recalled the dead to life. But their Master had done it. And since he has given them power over diseases, may he not also have clothed them with authority over death? This is at least possi-

ble. And where the affections are deeply enlisted, our hopes demand only possibilities. So instead of carrying the cherished corpse directly to the tomb, as the Oriental custom prescribed, they deposit it, after the usual washing, in an upper chamber, and despatch two men to Lydda after Peter. "Two" are sent to give dignity and weight to the mission; and the urgent petition they bear, is, "that he would not delay to come to them." We do not read that, on his arrival, they besought him to restore their lost friend to life. It is very doubtful whether they did this. But "they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which DORCAS made while she was with them." It was not in the ardent nature of Peter, that he should remain unmoved in a scene like this. No words are needed to tell him what they are all yearning after. But whether the longing of their hearts is to be gratified, may be as little known to him as to them. The bare thought of entering the lists with death, and attempting to wrest from his grasp a victim already

secured, would fill even an apostle's mind with solemn awe. But an inward impulse bids him to the work. So, "putting them all forth, he kneeled down and prayed." We need not ask about this prayer. With such a task before him, unattempted as yet since his Master's departure, and upon the issue of which so much would depend as to his own sense of the powers confided to him and his brethren, he could not fail to carry into this intercession the earnestness and importunity of the patriarch, when he wrestled with the Angel of the covenant. And it was not in vain. "Turning him to the body, he said, 'Tabitha, arise.' And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive."

Without dwelling upon the joy this event would awaken among those humble women, or upon the work of conversion which, as we are told, followed the miracle, one is ready to ask, what must be the state of a departed spirit, like that of DORCAS, during its absence

from the body? It is the faith of most of the Reformed churches, our own included, that the souls of believers do, at their death, immediately pass into glory: like the penitent thief, they go instantly to Christ, in paradise or heaven.* For to be with Christ is necessarily to be in heaven. But how may it consort with the Divine goodness, to allow a ransomed sinner to go up and taste the perfect bliss of heaven, and then be obliged to return to the earth, and resume its clay tabernacle, and enter anew into the conflict with sin and sorrow, and at length submit to the pains of death a second time? We have no means of resolving this question authoritatively; but it may be allowable to suggest a possible explanation of the difficulty. The number of persons to be raised from the dead prior to the general resurrection, was extremely small. This purpose being in contemplation at the time of their death, may it not be that they are exempted, by a special exertion of Almighty power, from the ordinary consequences of

* As to the identity of paradise and heaven, compare Rev. ii. 7, and xxii. 1, 2.

death; that, unlike believers generally, who ascend instantly to heaven, they literally "fall asleep" on quitting the body, and continue in an unconscious state until they return to their earthly life? This thought is thrown out simply by way of relieving the perplexity which every one must feel, who supposes that Dorcas and Lazarus and others were permitted to go up and share in the ineffable joys of heaven for a few hours, and then remanded to a fresh discipline amidst the trials and temptations of the world.

I have spoken of DORCAS as a representative character. She reminds us of neither the Virgin nor her cousin Elizabeth; of neither Mary nor Martha of Bethany; not yet of Lois nor Eunice. Some things she of course shared with each of these holy women—the essentials of a divine faith. But that which constituted her identity, and made her what she was as distinguished from these others, is summed up in the terse description of the narrator, "this woman was full of good works and alms-deeds which she did." She lived to be useful. Abounding in "alms-deeds," she gave away

her money with a generous hand. And, studious of good works, she supplemented her benefactions with her personal exertions. She not only sent, but went herself. Not satisfied with employing others to make garments for the poor, and carry medicines to the sick, and minister comfort to the troubled, she kept her own needle busy also, and her feet as well—going forth to look up wandering sheep, and sitting down to cheer with her presence the homes of sorrow and suffering.

It is a question of moment, *what is the precise value which Christianity attaches to offices of this kind?* The answers it has received, even within the bosom of the Church, are not merely dissimilar, but discordant and incompatible. On the one hand, these offices have been exalted to the high function of winning eternal life by their own intrinsic worth; sometimes as a complement to the merits of Christ, and, again, without any recognition of his Mediation. On the other hand, they have been disparaged in terms which would seem to divest them of all value in the matter of our salvation. The truth, as usual, lies between

the two extremes. Viewed with reference to the ground of a sinner's justification, good works are without worth or efficacy. There is no point which the sacred writers have guarded with more care than this. They will tolerate no partnership of merit between a holy God and his sinful creature. "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." "If by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."* This principle is fundamental. Salvation must be wholly of grace, or wholly of works; Christ's merits entirely, or entirely our own. He will have all the glory of our redemption, or He will have none. The moment we attempt to thrust into the foundation of our hope, any work, any gracious endowment, any spiritual exercise, of our own; we do, to

* Eph. ii. 8, 9. Rom. iii. 20. Gal. ii. 21. Rom. xi. 6.

that extent, impugn the sufficiency of the atonement, and rob Christ of the glory of our salvation.

But with no less emphasis do the Scriptures insist upon the necessity of good works. While carefully excluding them from all place in the ground and reason of a sinner's forgiveness, they teach that they are indispensable as the fruit of a justifying faith, and as evincing some degree of personal meetness for the service and presence of God. Under one system, the sinner is diligent in a round of religious duties and useful offices towards his fellow-creatures, in order that he may thereby earn forgiveness. Under the other, he lays his time and talents and property upon God's altar, because he is forgiven. The first is the servile obedience of the legalist: the last is the grateful homage of the loving child. And how much the last exceeds the first, as well in the profusion as the quality of its fruits, may be seen in the whole history of the Church.

These sentiments are too well understood among ourselves to require elucidation. Yet there may be occasion even here to say a word

in respect to the kind of life for which DORCAS was distinguished. The obligation to cultivate personal holiness, and to do what we can for the well-being of others, is universally conceded. Every one approves of a piety which goes out in acts of kindness towards the poor and the suffering. But it is not always considered, how *exalted* an estimate the SAVIOUR puts upon these acts; nor what that element in them is precisely, which impresses such a value upon them. We have the lesson best presented in his own example. The three years of his public ministry were spent chiefly in these very offices. Not to specify his numerous miracles, his visits of sympathy to the afflicted and suffering, and the benevolence which pervaded his teachings, let it suffice that "*He went about doing good.*" This was the aim and substance of his life: He lived to do good. And to live the life his Master lived, must be the paramount duty, as it will be the noblest distinction, of any disciple.

If this were not otherwise apparent, it would find its ample confirmation in the procedure at the final Judgment. For the irrever-

sible awards of that day are to turn upon these very services. "I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat:" "I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat." "I was a stranger, and ye took me in:" "I was a stranger, and ye took me not in." "I was naked, and ye clothed me:" "I was naked, and ye clothed me not." And so on to the end. What could go beyond this? Here the Lord of glory takes in his hand these humble ministries of Christian love to the children of want, and misfortune, and suffering, and holds them up on that most sublime of all occasions, before an assembled universe, as the bright *insignia* which distinguish his own blood-washed people from all others, and which are to define the line of endless separation between the ransomed and the lost. A decree which must otherwise have been veiled in such deep obscurity, becomes luminous when we note the vital element which gives these simple services so signal a beauty in His eyes. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of

these, ye did it not to me." "*Unto ME.*" "*Not unto ME.*"

What a flood of light these brief expressions pour upon the doctrine of good works. Church-going and sacraments are not enough. Outward morality is not enough. Integrity of purpose and benevolence of aim are not enough. Whatever may have been the case before the Advent, no obedience will suffice now which ignores the Mediation of Christ. We do not affirm that the standard of virtue has been changed by his mission to our world. But of such ineffable moment is the CROSS in God's esteem, that he will compel every human interest to defer to it. His government of the world turns upon it. He deals with nations and dynasties (in their ultimate issues) according as they honor or revile it. No community, no sect, no profession, no individual, can permanently enjoy his favor, if they slight JESUS OF NAZARETH. He reigns supreme. His arm upholds, his presence fills, the earth. He claims the love and homage of every human being. He actually dwells by his Spirit in every renewed heart. And He

will have men acknowledge him in his true character. The benevolence they practise without reference to him, may be honorable to themselves and useful to others. But it lacks that prime ingredient, "*Unto ME.*" It takes no notice of the cross. It does not see who is on the throne. It proceeds as it might, if the Word had never been made flesh; if Calvary and its wondrous history were all a myth; if the race were still under the primal dispensation, "Do this, and live." The Son of God will not endure this. He cannot forget that it was through the deep humiliation of the manger, and the awful anguish of the cross, he made his way to the mediatorial throne. And he will not allow us to overlook it. Our virtue, our worship, and our obedience, must be sanctified by the divine principle, "*Unto ME.*"

A most equitable demand this is. And it is tempered with a condescension and a liberality which have, and can have, no parallel. For, identifying himself with his people, he bids us see him in every one of them; and accepts whatever is done for them as done for himself. The DORCASES of the Church understand this.

It is "the suffering Christ in suffering humanity," that enkindles their sympathy and fires their zeal. In the moan of the widow and the orphan, of the prisoner and the exile, the voice they hear is the Master's voice. He comes to them daily in his poor disciples. They hear of Him sick and neglected in the solitudes of the moor, and in the thronged courts and alleys of the metropolis; and they hasten to succor him. From distant continents and islands his cry of distress reaches them; and they joyfully respond to his appeals. He asks their help to-day, and they give it. And to-morrow, and they give it. And the day after, and they give it. Others may grow weary. But they do not. They remember the "*unto ME.*" How can JESUS OF NAZARETH come too often? In his own time they will learn that He has remembered these things long after they have forgotten them. And when they ask, in their humility, "Lord, when did we thus minister to thee?" He will reply, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it UNTO ME."

Such is the place assigned to these offices in

the Christian system, and such the glorious reward that awaits them. A most grateful reflection it is, and finely illustrative of the broad, catholic spirit of the Gospel, that it should put all this honor upon services which are within every one's reach. For there is no disciple so humble or obscure, that he may not do something for the relief of human suffering or human sorrow. The narrowest sphere will present opportunities of this kind; and all that our gracious Master requires of us, is, that we meet, with a cheerful alacrity, the claims which are proper to our own place and endowments, not those which devolve upon others of richer gifts and loftier station. It will be conceded, however, that as wealth, and culture, and social position augment one's capacities of usefulness, so there is a peculiar charm in the spectacle of an accomplished woman (to speak only of that sex,) who rises superior to the blandishments of such a lot, and dedicates her life to the duties of Christian philanthropy.

In citing DORCAS as a primitive example of this class, it has been intimated that she was

probably an unmarried woman. That the DORCASES have not uniformly followed in her steps in this particular, is attested by innumerable witnesses. For where can you go without finding devoted wives and mothers, who have inherited her benevolent spirit and emulated her "good works and alms-deeds"? We cast no reproach upon these, when we name it as among the cardinal blessings of the Church, that so many of her faithful daughters have chosen a single life. We do not press to the quick the remark of the apostle; "The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit; but she that is married, careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband." But there will be no controversy on this point, viz., that whithersoever you turn, you find the burden and the honor of sustaining the active charities of our divine religion, largely devolved upon the class here commended by St. Paul; and that among those women who have declined the cares and the immunities of conjugal life, there will always be some whose radiant gifts and graces, alike

of person and of character, elevate your conceptions of what is possible to human nature even in this world, and recall to your recollection that utterance from above, "This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise." By no selfish aims are they inspired. Their's is no ascetic faith which evades its just responsibilities, and buries itself in a cloister, and crucifies all natural affection, and finds its heaven in an utter forgetfulness and contempt of everything beyond the sound of the Convent bell. Very different is their Christianity from this sickly pietism. Modest it is, and quiet, and unobtrusive. But it is robust and courageous. Instead of flying from duty, it courts it. Its sympathies with the common humanity are deep and true. It sees the evils which deform and oppress society; but is not appalled by them. Conscious that, as God's almoner, it holds in its hands the only antidote to the world's woes, it goes forth on its mission of mercy: mixing with men, as its Master did, in their chief places of concourse, and in their tranquil retreats; ministering, like Him, indifferently to

the body and the soul; thankful, when occasion offers, for the privilege of feeding or clothing a multitude; and rejoicing, no less, in the opportunity of wiping away the tears of a single poor widow, or taking up a solitary orphan and folding it to its bosom. *This* was the religion of DORCAS. And, immortal like its Lord, it survives and flourishes in our own day. Let me refer to an example of it which many who are here will recall with grateful affection, and with praise to God.

MARGARET LATIMER was born in Philadelphia, on the 8th day of January, 1783. Her parents, natives of the State of Delaware, were of Scotch-Irish extraction—a stock which has supplied some of the best blood in our national veins, and of which it is difficult to say, whether the State or the Church is the most indebted to it. Her father was an honored and successful merchant of our city, and a member of the Third (or Pine street) Presbyterian Church. Enjoying the best advantages afforded by the schools of that day, and the higher privileges of a refined Christian home, her youth gave early promise of those sterling virtues which

adorned her after life. She attended upon the ministrations of Dr. Archibald Alexander, during the five years he was Pastor of the Church just mentioned, and united with that Church on profession of her faith in November 1812, six months after he had resigned his charge for a Chair in the Theological Seminary at Princeton. She cherished a warm affection for him to the period of his death (October, 1851.) A profession of religion was with her no barren ceremonial. Recognizing its full significance, her faith in Christ was a vital principle which, from that time forth, pervaded her entire character, and moulded all her plans. The purpose was evidently formed, and she adhered to it with a constancy rarely witnessed, of living not unto herself, but unto Him who loved us. All who knew her saw the fruits of it; fruits which went on multiplying and ripening, until at length the Good Husbandman transplanted the aged tree into the Paradise above.

Not to enter into the details of MISS LATIMER'S biography (for which, indeed, the materials are not at hand), I design simply to speak

of her as we have been accustomed to meet her, and as her image dwells in so many loving hearts. And in doing this I shall even forego the pleasure of dwelling upon what she was to me as a Pastor, and to this Church, of which she was so bright an ornament. Instinctively, on the mention of her name, the mind turns to those benevolent Institutions with which her life has been so long intertwined. Not by any means that these defined the entire sphere of her beneficent activity. "This woman was *full* of good works and alms-deeds which she did." It was the law of her being, and nobly did she live up to it. But there are several of these Institutions which owe her a special debt of gratitude.

The first is the "FEMALE ASSOCIATION of Philadelphia," which held its Sixty-fifth annual meeting a few days ago. It was organized by a few ladies, who assembled for this purpose at the house of the late venerable Ashbel Green, D. D., in the autumn of the year 1800. The object they proposed to themselves was "The Relief of Women and Children in Reduced Circumstances." Ten years afterwards,

they obtained an act of Incorporation. By a wise provision of the original By-laws, twenty per centum of all monies coming into the treasury was to be invested as a permanent fund, the interest of which only should be applied to the purposes of the Association. This has long been the chief source of its income. Why the number of annual subscribers should be so small (less than one hundred and fifty) can be due only to the fact that the Society is so little known: and this, again, results from its design and plan of operation. A single word in the title will explain this. It is for the "Relief of women and children in *reduced* circumstances." Not for the needy indiscriminately; but for those who have known better days, and been "reduced." How many such there are! And how hard a lot it is,—to have the tastes and the habits and the longings and the recollections, if not of affluence, at least of comfort; and yet be poor—perhaps very poor, and withal sick or decrepit besides. These are the real sufferers. And the more keenly do they suffer because they have to bear their trials in silence. It is one of the main objects of the "FEMALE ASSO-

CIATION" to meet this difficulty. A small and judicious Committee is entrusted with a certain portion of its income, which is appropriated at their discretion. All applications are made to them, and with them they end. Where they are satisfied, they bestow relief. No names are mentioned even to the Board of Managers. The meritorious are relieved, without any exposure of their necessities, or any trial of feeling. Could anything surpass the grace and delicacy of a mechanism like this? Is it not philanthropy in its sweetest guise? Yet how many excellent Christians there are in our city, who never heard of this Association. For sixty-five years the stream has been flowing at our feet so quietly that the noise of the great Babel has absorbed its lowly murmur. We have scarcely noticed the grass that fringes its margin, and the perennial flowers there; or, if we have, it has been without divining the source of the bloom and verdure that met the eye. Most fitting it was that this admirable Institution should, for a long term of years, have numbered MISS LATIMER among its Managers. For she possessed every quality which

such a trust demands; and the material aid bestowed upon its afflicted beneficiaries, would derive a double value from her refined and generous sympathy.

“THE PHILADELPHIA ORPHAN SOCIETY” is much better known; and with it her name has been inseparably associated. As the “FEMALE ASSOCIATION” was formed in the parlor of the Rev. Dr. Green, then the Pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church, so the “ORPHAN SOCIETY” was organized (Dec. 20, 1814) in a school-room attached to that Church. The merit of originating it belongs to Mrs. ROBERT RALSTON, a lady whose happiness it was to illustrate in her appropriate sphere, that enlightened and munificent benevolence which has embalmed her husband’s name among the cherished memories of our city. Of the twenty-four original Managers, MISS LATIMER was the last survivor but one. The anniversary which preceded her death, completed her half-century of service in behalf of this Asylum. Rarely does it happen in this mutable world, that an individual is allowed to hold a place for fifty years at the same Council-board. Still more rare was her

lot, in that her almost uninterrupted health and her habit of remaining in town the year round, put it in her power to meet all the claims of her position with such unvarying constancy. No wonder that she had come to be looked upon, both by inmates and Managers, as a part of the Institution itself—for such she really was.

I have said that she was the last survivor of the original Board but one. In the list of Managers annexed to the First Annual Report (1816), there is a single name which represents that ancient race, whose glory it was to have JEHOVAH for their KING; and through whom the world has received the true religion, and the only true civilization. It has pleased Him in whose hand are our times, that this excellent woman should see every seat at that Board vacated but her own. Animated by a truly catholic spirit, and carrying her genuine charity into every department of life, she has for fifty years been a steadfast and efficient co-worker with her *Christian* sisters, in the management of the Asylum. Most of the Annual Reports are from her pen, as

the Secretary of the Board. And the orphan has found in her a most kind and faithful friend. Suffering, as I understand she is now, from physical infirmities which have laid her aside from her chosen work, I hope the occasion may excuse this passing reference to a Lady so venerable in years and in character, whose life-long labors in the cause of humanity entitle her to our gratitude, and whose trials must command our respectful sympathy.

Like the Orphans' Institution, "THE INDIGENT WIDOWS' AND SINGLE WOMEN'S SOCIETY OF PHILADELPHIA" originated with MRS. RALSTON, who presided over both Societies until her death in 1820. It was organized in the Session-room of the First Presbyterian Church, on the 9th day of January, 1817. Of the original Board of Managers, not one survives. It included, among others, Mrs. Thomas Latimer, and Miss Elizabeth Latimer, the aunt and sister of our deceased friend, and ladies of kindred spirit with herself. Her own name appears first as a Manager in the Report for 1836. And from that period to the close of her life, she devoted herself to the interests

of this admirable charity, with characteristic fidelity.

A fourth Institution with which she was connected, was, "THE FEMALE BIBLE SOCIETY" of our city. This Society was organized on the 16th of March, 1814, in the parlor of MRS. RALSTON'S house; and she was its first President. Its plan contemplates the formation of auxiliary Societies in the several Churches, or the districts, of our city. A considerable number of these auxiliaries have been established; and their receipts should be largely augmented. The Institution, like those previously named, moves in its orbit very tranquilly, but to very good purpose. MISS LATIMER became one of its Managers in the year 1839, so that it had the benefit of her wise counsels and firm support for twenty-six years. Her associates recall her cordial interest in its prosperity, and the cheer her presence lent to their meetings, with the same grateful emotions with which she is remembered at the other Boards of which she was a member.

You will feel that "this woman was, indeed, *full* of good works," when I state, that still

another of the noble Charities which adorn our city, claimed and received her aid. Nine years after the "ASYLUM FOR THE DEAF AND DUMB" was founded, MISS LATIMER was appointed on the "Ladies Committee," which is concerned in the management of its Household affairs. Of this Committee she was a member for thirty-six years,—until her death. If her duties here were less onerous than in some of the other Institutions, they were met in the same genial spirit. Here, as elsewhere, she exercised her chosen vocation, of making as many hearts glad as she could reach. With a thoughtful kindness she, from time to time, distributed presents among these poor children of silence; and they always hailed her as their friend.

I have taken the somewhat unusual course, of referring to these Institutions before speaking of MISS LATIMER'S peculiar traits, because it was in these relations she was so widely known. If it were required to name the salient points of her character, the demand might occasion some embarrassment. For it was not one or two conspicuous and over-

shadowing virtues that distinguished her, but an assemblage of graces, natural and acquired, so adjusted and blended as to form a symmetrical whole. The basis of her character was sound religious principle. Thoroughly instructed in the Scriptures, she accepted without reserve, and maintained with inflexible firmness, the system of doctrine and worship in which she had been reared. But she conceded to others the liberty she claimed for herself. Her faith was dearer to her than life. But she was a stranger to bigotry. Her Christian love went out spontaneously towards all who bore her Saviour's image. Indeed, this would seem to be the reigning spirit in the several Institutions of which we have been speaking. For it is otherwise inexplicable how Boards representing so many different Churches, should go on by the half-century together, without feeling the breath of sectarian controversy. How beautifully does the Psalmist say of this spirit, "It is as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion."

Of MISS LATIMER'S prudence and wisdom,

her ingenuousness and candor, her zeal and energy, no one can be ignorant who knew her at all. A stranger to duplicity, she always said just what she meant, and meant what she said. Her judgment was sound and discriminating. She was careful in forming her opinions; and if at any time her decisions failed to command the assent of others, it was usually in cases where she was misled by her proverbial kindness of heart. The more subtle types of depravity would sometimes ensnare the tenderness of her nature. This element gave the greater value to her resolution and perseverance: for they are fruits which do not often grow on the same stem. Her capacity of work, and of constancy in it, might be seen in the number and variety of the schemes and Societies which sought her aid, in addition to all her private and personal efforts for the good of others, and the wide range of courtesies imposed by her elevated social position. Her life could not have brought with it many idle moments.

You will anticipate me, in referring to another cluster of graces which embellished

her character—her amiable disposition; her serene temperament; her unfailing cheerfulness and vivacity. Here was the charm of her presence. You felt it on approaching her. It seemed as if the sun always shone around her. There was no trifling, no unfitting levity; but just that kind of chastened mirth which, grateful in the young, is doubly grateful in the aged, and grateful most of all in an aged Christian. No marvel that people of every age were drawn towards her. Who could resist a magnet like this? She never lost her interest in current affairs. Without forgetting that she was on pilgrimage to a “better country;” without for one moment yielding to the illusion that this world was her portion; she accepted it as part of a pilgrim’s vocation, to do everything in her power for the people among whom she sojourned, and to make the path she was travelling so inviting in their eyes, that they might feel constrained to follow her. If Christians generally were more careful to foster this side of their religion, people would better comprehend that divine aphor-

ism, "Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace."

It will be readily seen with what efficiency these qualities would clothe MISS LATIMER in the discharge of her official duties. The administration of trusts like the two older Asylums with which she was connected, must involve many embarrassing questions. A community of eighty or a hundred orphans, and another of as many poor and aged women, must needs evolve some fruits that did not grow in the primeval Eden. It will, of necessity, present some crooked tempers, some irritable nerves, some intractable habits, some infractions of the golden rule. And when the question comes up before the Board of management, what shall be done with this case and with that, there will often be an honest diversity of sentiment, and, possibly, some vehemence of argument. The conjecture may be hazarded, that now and then in the course of a half-century, some transient gust of feeling might sweep even through *such* a Council-chamber, and ruffle, for a moment only, the placid waters. But it is the concurrent testimony of

Ladies who sat for a long series of years with MISS LATIMER at each of those Boards, that they *never* knew her to betray any untoward temper, nor to utter an ungracious word. And carrying the same genial spirit from the seat of authority into the wards and work-rooms, with such mingled firmness and benignity did she administer discipline, that a rebuke from her lips generally accomplished its end, and left no sting behind. What words can exaggerate the moral beauty or the practical value of an influence like this, in the government of two Institutions, filled with orphans, and infirm, aged women? And what a debt of gratitude do these Institutions owe to Him who allowed them to enjoy so priceless a blessing for so long a period.

It has been intimated already that MISS LATIMER copied the Scriptural pattern before us, as well in "alms-deeds" as in "good works." All that it seems proper to say on this point, is, that she fully recognized the Christian doctrine of stewardship. Feeling that she was not her own, she laid her property at her Master's feet, and simply asked

Him what she should do with it. A generous supporter of the Boards of our Church, and of the Institutions with which she was connected, her benefactions were not restricted to seasons and occasions, but went out in every direction. Her hand was open as the day. If her Pastor, or any intimate friend, was collecting money for any deserving object, it was hardly safe to pass her by. She claimed the privilege of taking part in everything of this sort that was going forward; and always in that unostentatious way which says,

It is not mine, O Lord, I give,
I give thee but thine own.

“The Lord loveth a cheerful giver;” and we need no voice from heaven to tell us that He loved *her*.

A person of four-score, on looking around, may well ask with Dr. Johnson, “Where is the world into which I was born?” Sad enough are the changes which such an one must have witnessed. It ought not, perhaps, to surprise us that with these experiences, and the gradual increase of bodily infirmities, the aged are usually given more or less to

despondency, and occasionally to peevishness. But there is an art of growing old gracefully. And MISS LATIMER had learned it in the only school where it is adequately taught. Some signal advantages she enjoyed in this respect over most Christians. The chief of these was the bright and hopeful tone of her piety, inspired and nurtured as it was by a calm, unfaltering trust in her Redeemer. She seems to have enjoyed through life that "full assurance of hope," which is the antepast of heaven. With this coalesced, in grateful harmony, her warm affections and native vivacity. While the auspicious result was not a little promoted by a vigorous constitution, and an exemption from those pecuniary troubles which are the bane of many an otherwise happy household. Moulded by these and their kindred influences, she offered to all observers one of the most pleasing objects to be contemplated in this world, the spectacle of an intelligent, cheerful, devout, philanthropic old age. She had arrived at the full autumn of life; but we looked in vain for the "sere and yellow leaf." Her sprightliness, her quick sensibility to suffering,

her interest in society, her ready sympathy with everything true and good, knew no wane. The only change observable to the eye of intimate friendship, was a more child-like faith, a deepening of that humility which had always distinguished her, "a closer walk with God," an increasing solicitude to improve every opportunity of doing good, and a gradual mellowing and ripening of her whole character as of a shock of corn about to be gathered into the garner. When at length the time came, it was found "fully ripe."

Kindly and mercifully did her Heavenly Father deal with her to the close. The clay tabernacle was gently taken down. She had no protracted suffering. No doubts—no fears disturbed her peace. The serene heavens under which she had walked for so many years, betrayed no shadow even of a passing cloud. All that the few friends who stood around her knew, or cared to know, was, that she went down into the valley of the shadow of death, leaning upon the rod and staff of the GOOD SHEPHERD.*

* May 30, 1865.

Thus lived and thus died MARGARET LATIMER. It seemed due to the grace which made her what she was, that some humble tribute should be paid to her memory. I think I can appeal to that large body of Christian Ladies who, in their several Societies, “labored with her in the Gospel,” that whereinsoever this brief portraiture of her character may be open to criticism, it is rather in the way of defect than of excess.* You knew her worth. You feel how great a breach her removal has made in your various Boards: how bright a light has been extinguished. You dwell with a sort of painful pleasure upon your long years of delightful fellowship with her, in prosecuting those schemes of enlightened benevolence which were so dear to her heart and your own. In the absence of those near kindred who usually make up a household, you fol-

* In a note just received from one of these Ladies, whose long life has been devoted to these and their kindred charities, and whose name were it proper to mention it, would give peculiar worth to the statement, there is this most remarkable testimony:—“I have known Miss Latimer since my girlhood, and have yet to discover the shadow of a flaw in that pure and spotless character, so mellowed too by the rich grace of God.”

lowed her to the grave with your tears. The widow and the orphan wept with you. You all felt it as a personal bereavement. And you gave, as you will continue to give, your Christian sympathy to One of your esteemed and faithful co-workers, upon whom this blow has fallen with yet greater severity. Allied by no ties of consanguinity, nor even of affinity, an afflictive dispensation brought these two Ladies together under the same roof in their younger days. The friendship born of that intercourse survived the vicissitudes and sorrows of a long separation, and at length solaced their mutual loneliness by restoring them to each other in old age. Blessed friendship! type and earnest of the oneness of the ransomed in heaven! This broken chain will be reunited.

I have detained you very long. But you will bear with me while I present a single thought more. There is a time with us all when we choose our course of life; a fork in the road when we decide for this path or for that. There are young persons present who have reached this point, or are nearing it.

Let me ask you, before you decide, to compare an example like this we have been contemplating, with a life devoted to selfish gratification. While MISS LATIMER was fulfilling her course, there were many lives of that sort running parallel with her's. Take any one at random as a sample, and when the end came, what was the ordinary result? What has been the familiar history of many a *mere* woman of fashion? Forty—fifty—sixty years surrendered to pomp and vanity, to ambition and luxury, to dress and parade, to amusements and frivolity. No intellectual culture, no discipline of the passions, no training of the affections, no sympathy with suffering, no hand lifted to succor the needy, no word of cheer to the struggling. Her time, thoughts, plans, means, all concentrated upon herself: her race contemned, her soul forgotten, her Saviour spurned, her God denied! What a summing up is this for the life of a rational and immortal being? Who is the better for such a woman's having lived? Of what moment will it be to the Church where (if she worshipped at all) she offered her formal devotions, that

her place is made vacant? What charity will suffer by her absence? Where are the widows and orphans whose tears will bedew her grave? Where are the dissolute and outcast she has helped to reclaim? What cottage has been cheered by her bounty? What friendless but deserving youth has she assisted in his education, or directed to some useful employment? What memorial has she left even in the hearts of those whom she met in her nightly rounds of amusement? How many really loved her, living; or will mourn her, dead? And who will care to let his thoughts follow her into eternity?

How refreshing to turn from this portraiture to the other; from a life of fashionable pleasure, to a life consecrated to genuine religion. We cannot, it is true, gather up the results of such a life. But we must all confess its sterling worth. We feel its surpassing beauty. It clothes humanity in its noblest guise. It brings with it solid happiness. It commands universal respect; for even the giddy votaries of the world pay it instinctive homage. Humbly assimilating itself to its Divine Author and

Preserver, its exalted mission is to confer benefits; to make others better and happier. On every side it dispenses good. Sowing beside all waters, it reaps its daily harvest of blessing. It opens many a secret spring of bounty which will flow on while time itself flows on. It kindles many a light which will shine until its gentle rays are lost in the effulgence of the throne. And all the while it counts itself as nothing; shuns observation; glories only in the cross; and knows no joy like that of gathering jewels for the Saviour's crown. Well has John Newton said, "The sun in his daily course beholds nothing so excellent and honorable upon earth as such a Christian; for he is the object and residence of Divine love, the charge of angels, and ripening for everlasting glory."

I should greatly wrong you by supposing, that even the gayest among you could hesitate in framing your comparative estimate of two characters like these. But your latent feeling may be, that this is not the actual alternative before you: that you may choose *for the present* a life of worldly pleasure, without carrying it to the extreme of the instance just depicted.

Very well. Let us take the path toward which you incline, as it lies patent to every eye, and just as it is trod by the masses of pleasure-seekers. We need not exaggerate their faults and failures. It would be uncandid to deny, that their serried ranks supply examples as well of superior intelligence and true generosity, as of graceful and winning accomplishments. But this cannot redeem the life they are leading from the fatal taint which empisons and defaces it. Let me put the case before you, in the weighty words of one of the most gifted writers of your sex—one, let me add, whose works should be found in every family. Although sketched seventy years ago, and in a foreign land, the picture seems like a fresh photograph of one of our own cities.

“The contagion of dissipated manners is so deep, so wide, and so fatal, that if I were called to assign the prominent cause of the greater part of the misfortunes and corruptions of the great and gay in our days, I should not look for it principally in any obviously great or striking circumstance, not in the practice of notorious vices; not originally in the derelict-

tion of Christian principle: but I should without hesitation ascribe it, to a growing, regular, systematic series of amusements; to an incessant, boundless, and not very disreputable **DIS-SIPATION**. Other corruptions, though more formidable in appearance, are yet less fatal in some respects, because they leave us intervals to reflect on their turpitude, and spirit to lament their excesses. But dissipation is the more hopeless, as by engrossing almost the entire life, and enervating the whole moral and intellectual system, it leaves neither time for reflection, nor space for self-examination, nor temper for the cherishing of right affections, nor leisure for the operation of sound principles, nor interval for regret, nor vigor to resist temptation, nor energy to struggle for amendment."

"To instance only in the growing habit of frequenting great assemblies, which is generally thought insignificant, and is in effect so vapid, that one almost wonders how it can be dangerous;—it would excite laughter (because we are so broken in to the habit) were I to insist on the immorality of passing one's whole life

in a crowd. But those promiscuous myriads which compose the society, falsely so called, of the gay world; who are brought together without esteem, remain without pleasure, and part without regret; who live in a round of diversions the possession of which is so joyless, though the absence is so insupportable; these, by the mere force of incessant and indiscriminate association, weaken, and in time wear out, the best feelings and affections of the human heart.”*

All this is condensed by an apostle into a single pithy sentence: “She that liveth in pleasure *is dead while she liveth.*” Such a woman is “dead” as to any adequate mental culture; for the shreds and parings of time she may save from company, will not be given to solid reading or improving conversation. She is “dead” as to the household with which she has a nominal connection: for home is a tame and insipid place to one whose morbid appetite craves the stimulus of constant excitement. She is “dead” to society; except as she may undesignedly help somebody by the

* Hannah More.

money she expends upon her amusements. She is "dead" to the Church; for her influence is out of its pale, and still more if within it, is thoroughly against evangelical religion. She is "dead" to the world; for she staunches none of its wounds, lightens none of its burdens, and soothes none of its sorrows. And she is "dead" to herself and her God; for she is sinking her spiritual in her earthly nature, and living as if there were no God and no hereafter.

Here is the path, my young friends, which invites you. Crowded it is, and very gay, and very brilliant. But you will greatly mistake if you confound the bustle and splendor of the scene with solid happiness. Ever and anon, in the midst of this diversion,

"The heart, distrusting, asks if this be joy."

Were the joy more real, its evanescence were enough to brand such a life with surpassing folly. And then there remains the overpowering question, which will come back, and ought to come back, like another handwriting upon the wall, to disturb your revelry, "What will ye do in the *end* thereof?"

Or, if this picture be still "overdrawn," tone it down until it fairly represents your own ideal of a life of fashionable pleasure; and then compare it with the history we have been rehearsing. How such a presence dwarfs your mere woman of the world into insignificance! Amidst the artificial lights of her chosen haunts, she may shine with a certain imposing splendor. But placed side by side with one who reflects the mild radiance of the Cross, her splendor disappears. Your taper goes out in the pure sun-light. Humanity, though fallen, is true to its Lord. It intuitively recognizes the vast superiority of the goodness which is of heaven, to any type of earthborn virtue; and still more, the transcendent value of a life of Christian benevolence, as contrasted with a life of frivolity. Between these paths you are to choose. And through the Divine mercy, you come to the resolution of this momentous question, with the signal advantage of having the better way set before you "in living characters."

The SAVIOUR Himself, the only PERFECT

MODEL, "left us an Example that we should follow his steps." Besides many others upon whom this great Example has not been lost, here is one whose case comes directly home to us. For eighty years she went in and out amongst us. A line of light marks every step of that long pilgrimage. Retrace it for yourselves, and you will see how bright and fragrant it is. Look around, and you will learn that although her life has reached its earthly term, she is in no danger of being forgotten. Loved and honored while living, how many of the pure and good of our city, of every name and sect, enshrine her image in their affections, and mourn her as a personal friend. Nor this alone. A yet more sacred memorial she has in the hearts of the Widows and Orphans whom she carried so long in *her* heart; in the touching grief of those mute children whose faces always lighted up at her approach; and in the gratitude of that great band of sufferers, known only to herself and her Lord, whose sorrows her secret bounty alleviated.

If you falter in your choice between these

roads, go, stand by the grave of MARGARET LATIMER; and decide whether you will dedicate your life to mere self-indulgence, or to the glory of God and the well-being of your race.