

# The Young Cottager

## by Legh Richmond

### PREFACE:

The following true narrative, from the pen of Legh Richmond, gives a clear and sweet account of the Lord's mercy manifested in rescuing one of His tender lambs out of the "paw of the lion." "Direct its course, Oh my God. May the eye that reads, and the ear that hears the record of little Jane, through the power of the Spirit of the Most High God, each become a witness for the truth as it is in Jesus," was his prayer. May the Lord fulfill this petition, and use this reprint for the good of many, and for the glory of His Name.

JANE S. was the daughter of poor parents in the village where it pleased God first to cast my lot in the ministry. My acquaintance with her commenced, when she was twelve years of age, by her weekly attendance at my house among a number of children whom I invited and regularly instructed every Saturday afternoon.

They used to read, repeat catechisms, psalms, hymns and portions of Scripture. I accustomed them also to pass a kind of free conversational examination, according to their age and ability, in those subjects by which I hoped to see them made wise unto salvation.

On the summer evenings I frequently used to assemble this little group out of doors in my garden, sitting under the shade of some trees which protected us from the heat of the sun; from hence a scene appeared which rendered my occupation the more interesting. For adjoining the spot where we sat, and only separated from us by a fence, was the churchyard, surrounded with beautiful prospects in every direction. There lay the mortal remains of thousands, who from age to age, in their different generations, had been successively committed to the grave, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. Here the once famed ancestors of the rich and the less known forefathers of the poor, lay mingling their dust together, alike waiting the resurrection from the dead.

I had not far to look for subjects of warning and exhortation suitable to my little flock of lambs that I was feeding. I could point to the heaving sods that marked the different graves and separated them from each other and tell my pupils that, young as they were, none of them were too young to die; and that probably more than half of the bodies which were buried there were those of little children. I hence took occasion to speak of the nature and value of a soul, and to ask them where they expected their souls to go when they departed hence and were no more seen upon earth.

I told them Who was "the resurrection and the life" and Who alone could take away the sting of death. I used to remind them that the hour was "coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth, those who have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and those who have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." I often availed myself of these opportunities to call to their recollection the more recent deaths of their own relatives that lay buried so near us. Some had lost a parent, others a brother or sister, some perhaps had lost all these and were committed to the mercy of their neighbors, as fatherless or motherless orphans. Such circumstances were occasionally useful to excite tender emotions, favorable to serious impressions.

Sometimes I sent the children to the various stones which stood at the head of the graves, and bid them learn the epitaphs inscribed upon them. I took pleasure in seeing the little ones thus dispersed in the churchyard, each committing to memory a few verses written in commemoration of the departed. They would soon accomplish the desired object and eagerly return to me, ambitious to repeat their task. Thus my churchyard became a book of instruction, and every grave-stone a leaf of education for my young disciples.

The church itself stood in the midst of the ground. It was a spacious antique structure. Within those very walls, I first proclaimed the message of God to sinners. As these children surrounded me I sometimes pointed to the church, spoke to them of the nature of public worship, the duty of regular attendance on its services, and urged their serious attention to the means of grace. I showed them the sad state of many countries, where neither churches nor Bibles were known, and the no less melancholy condition of multitudes at home, who sinfully neglect worship and slight the Word of God, and thus tried to make them sensible of their own blessings and privileges.

Little Jane always came to these weekly seasons of instruction. I made no very particular observations concerning her during the first twelve months or more after her commencement of attendance. She was not then remarkable for any peculiar attainment. On the whole I used to think her rather more slow of apprehension than most of her companions. She usually repeated her tasks correctly but was seldom able to make answers to questions for which she was not previously prepared with replies. Her countenance was not engaging; her eye discovered no remarkable liveliness. She read tolerably well, took pains, and improved in it. Mildness and quietness marked her general demeanor. She was very constant in her attendance on public worship at the church as well as on my Saturday instruction at home. But generally speaking, she was little noticed, except for her regular and orderly conduct. Had I then been asked of which of my young scholars I had formed the most favorable opinion, poor Jane might have been altogether omitted in the list.

How little do we oftentimes know what God is doing in other people's hearts! What poor calculators and judges we frequently prove, until He opens our eyes! His thoughts are not our thoughts; neither our ways His ways.

I knew nothing of her mind; I had comparatively overlooked her. I have often been sorry for it since. Conscience seemed to rebuke me when I afterwards discovered what the Lord had been doing for her soul, as if I had neglected her; yet it was not done designedly. She was unknown to us all, except that, as I have since found out, her regularity and abstinence from the sins and follies of her young peers, brought upon her many taunts and jeers from others, which she bore very meekly.

It was about fifteen months from the first period of Jane's attendance on my Saturday school, when I missed her from her customary place. Two or three weeks had gone by without my making any particular enquiry respecting her. I was at length informed that she was ill; but apprehending no peculiar cause for alarm nearly two months passed away without any further mention of her name being made. At length a poor old woman in the village, of whose religious disposition I had formed a good opinion, came and said to me: "Sir, have you not missed Jane S. at your house on Saturday afternoons?"

"Yes," I replied, "I believe she is ill."

"And very ill, I fear," said the woman.

"What! do you apprehend any danger in the case?"

"Sir, she is very poorly indeed, and I think is in a decline. She wants to see you, Sir, but is afraid you would not come to see such a poor young child as she is."

"Not go where poverty and sickness may call me? How can she imagine so! At which house does she live?"

"Sir, it is a poor place and she is ashamed to ask you to come there. Her near neighbors are noisy, wicked people, and her own father and mother are strange folks. They all make fun of poor Jane, because she reads her Bible so much."

"Do not tell me about poor places and wicked people, that is the very situation where a minister of the gospel is called to do the most good. I shall go to see her; you may let her know my intention."

"I will, Sir; I go in most days to speak to her and it does one's heart good to hear her talk."

"Indeed!" said I, "what does she talk about?"

"Talk about, poor thing! Why, nothing but holy things, such as the Bible, and Jesus Christ, and life and death, and her soul, and heaven and hell, and your discourses, and the books you used to teach her, Sir. Her father says he'll have no such godly things in his house; and her own mother scoffs at her and says she supposes Jane counts herself better than other folks. But she does not mind all that. She will read her books, and then talk so pretty to her mother, and plead with her to think about her soul."

"The Lord forgive me," thought I, "for not being more attentive to this poor child's case." I seemed to feel the importance of infantile instruction more than ever I had done before, and felt a rising hope that this girl might prove a kind of first-fruits of my labors.

"I hope, I really hope," said I, "that this dear child will prove to be a true child of God. And if so, what a mercy to her and what a mercy for me!"

The next morning I went to see the child. Her cottage was of the humblest kind. It stood against a high bank of earth which formed a sort of garden behind it. The front aspect of the cottage was chiefly rendered pleasing by a honeysuckle which luxuriantly climbed up the wall. As I entered the house, its flowers put forth a very sweet and refreshing smell. Intent on the object of my visit, I at the same moment offered up silent prayer to God and entertained a hope that the welcome fragrance of the shrub might be illustrative of that all-prevailing intercession of a Redeemer, which I trusted was, in the case of this little child, as "a sweet-smelling savor" to her heavenly Father. The very flowers and leaves of the garden and field, are emblematic of higher things when grace teaches us to make them so.

Jane was in bed upstairs. I found no one in the house with her, except the woman who had brought me the message on the evening before. The instant I looked on the girl I perceived a very marked change in her countenance! It had acquired the consumptive hue, both white and red. She received me first with a very sweet smile and then instantly burst into a flood of tears, just sobbing out: "I am so glad to see you, Sir!"

"I am very much concerned at your being so ill my child, and grieved that I was not sooner aware of your state. But I hope the Lord designs it for your good."

Her eye, not her tongue, powerfully expressed: "I hope and think He does."

"Well, my poor child, since you can no longer come to see me, I will come and see you, and we will talk over the subjects which I used to explain to you."

"Indeed, Sir, I shall be so glad!"

"That I believe she will," said the woman, "for she loves to talk of nothing so much as what she has heard you say in your sermons and in the books you have given her."

"Are you really desirous, my dear child, to be a true Christian?"

"Oh yes, yes Sir; I am sure that I desire that above all things!"

I was astonished and delighted at the earnestness and simplicity with which she spoke these words.

“Sir,” added she, “I have been thinking as I lay on my bed for many weeks past, how good you are to instruct us poor children, what would become of us without it?”

“I am truly glad that my instructions have not been lost upon you, and pray God that this your present sickness may be an instrument of blessing in His hands, to prove, humble, and sanctify you. My dear child, you have a soul, an immortal soul to think of. You remember what I have often said to you about the value of a soul: What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul.”

“Yes, Sir, I well remember that you told us that when our bodies are put into the grave, that our souls will then go either to the good or the bad place.”

“And to which of these places do you think that, as a sinner in the sight of God, you deserve to go.”

“To the bad one, Sir.”

“What! to everlasting destruction?”

“Yes, Sir.”

“Why so?”

“Because I am a great sinner.”

“And must all great sinners go to hell?”

“They all deserve it, and I am sure I do.”

“But is there no way of escape? Is there no way for a great sinner to be saved?”

“Yes, Sir, Christ is the Savior.”

“And whom does He save?”

“All believers.”

“And do you believe in Christ yourself?”

“I do not know, Sir. I wish I did; but I feel that I love Him.”

“What do you love Him for?”

“Because He is good to poor children’s souls like mine.”

“What has He done for you?”

“He died for me, Sir; and what could he do more?”

“And what do you hope to gain by His death?”

“A good place when I die, if I believe in Him and love Him.”

“Have you felt any uneasiness, on account of your soul?”

“Oh yes, Sir, a great deal. When you used to talk to us children on Saturdays, I often felt as if I could hardly bear it and wondered that others could seem careless. I thought I was not fit to die. I thought of all the bad things I had ever done and said, and believed God must be very angry with me, for you often told us that God would not be mocked and that Christ said if we were not converted, we could not go to heaven. Sometimes I thought I was so young it did not matter, and then again it seemed to me a great sin to think so. I could see that my heart was not right, and how could such a heart be fit for heaven? Indeed, Sir, I used to feel very uneasy.”

“My dear Jane, I wish I had known all this before. Why did you never tell me about it?”

“Sir, I dared not. Indeed I could not well say what was the matter with me, and I thought you would look upon me as very bold if I had spoken about myself to such a gentleman as you, yet I often wished that you knew what I felt and feared. Sometimes as we went away from your house, I could not help crying and then the other children laughed and jeered at me.

Sometimes, Sir, I thought that you did not think so well of me as of the rest of the children and that hurt me, yet I knew I deserved no particular favor because I was the chief of sinners.”

“My dear, what made Paul say that he was the chief of sinners? Can you repeat the verse?”

“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, is not that right, Sir?”

“Yes, my child, it is right; remember now and for evermore, that Christ came into the world to save the chief of sinners.”

“Sir, I am so glad He did. It makes me hope that He will save me, though I am a poor sinful girl. Sir, I am very ill and I do not think I shall ever get well again. I want to go to Christ if I die.”

“Go to Christ while you live, my dear child, and He will not cast you away when you die. He who said ‘Let the little children come to Me,’ waits to be gracious to them, and forbids them not.”

“What made you first think so seriously about the state of your soul?”

“Your talking about the graves in the churchyard, and telling us how many young children were buried there. I remember you said, one day, nearly twelve months ago, ‘Children, where will you be a hundred years hence? Children! Where do you think you shall go when you die? Children! If you were to die tonight, are you sure you would go to Christ and be happy?’ Sir, I never shall forget your saying, ‘Children,’ three times together in that solemn way.”

“Did you never before that day, feel any desire about your soul?”

“Yes, Sir. I think I first had that desire almost as soon as you began to teach us on Saturday afternoons; but on that day I felt as I never did before. I shall never forget it. All the way as I went home, and all that night, these words were in my thoughts: ‘Children! where do you think you shall go when you die?’ I thought I must leave off all my bad ways, or where should I go when I died?”

“And what effect did these thoughts produce in your mind?”

“Sir, I tried to live better and I did leave off many bad ways, but the more I strove, the more difficult I found it! My heart seemed so hard, and then I could not tell anyone my case.”

“Could you not tell it to the Lord who hears and answers prayers?”

“My prayers” (here she blushed and sighed) “are very poor at the best, and at that time I scarcely knew how to pray at all as I ought. But I did sometimes ask the Lord for a better heart.”

There was a character in all this conversation which marked a truly sincere and enlightened state of mind. She spoke with all the simplicity of a child, and yet the seriousness of a Christian. I could scarcely persuade myself that she was the same girl. Her countenance was filled with interesting affections, and always spoke much more than her tongue could utter. She now possessed an ease and liberty in speaking, to which she had formerly been a stranger. Nevertheless she was modest, humble, and sincere. Her readiness to converse was the result of spiritual concern, not childish curiosity.

“Sir,” continued little Jane, “I had one day been thinking that I was neither fit to live nor die, for I could find no comfort in this world, and I was sure I deserved none in the next world. One day you sent me to learn the verse on Mrs. B.’s grave stone, and there were two lines which abode with me.”

“Which were they?”

“Hail glorious Gospel, heavenly light, whereby  
We live with comfort, and with comfort die.”

“I wished that glorious gospel was mine, that I might live and die with comfort, and it seemed as if I thought it might be so. I never felt so happy in all my life before. The words were often in my thoughts, Live with comfort, and with comfort die.”

“Glorious gospel, indeed! My dear child, what is the meaning of the word Gospel?”

“Good news.”

“Good news for whom?”

“For wicked sinners, Sir.”

“Who sends this good news for wicked sinners?”

“The Lord Almighty.”

“And who brings this good news?”

“Sir, you brought it to me.”

Here my soul melted in an instant and I could not repress the tears. The last answer was equally unexpected and affecting. I felt a father’s tenderness and gratitude for a new and first-born child. Jane wept likewise. After a little pause she said:

“Oh Sir, I wish you would speak to my father and mother and little brother, for I am afraid they are going on very badly.”

“How so?”

“Sir, they drink, and swear, and quarrel, and do not like what is godly; and it does grieve me so, I cannot bear it. If I speak a word to them about it, they are very angry, and laugh, and bid me be quiet, and not try to be their teacher. Sir, I am ashamed to tell you this of them, but I hope it is not wrong; I mean it for their good.”

I then prayed with the child, and promised to visit her constantly.

Little Jane’s illness was of a lingering nature, I often visited her. The soul of this young Christian was gradually, but effectually, preparing for heaven. I have seldom witnessed in any older person, under similar circumstances, stronger marks of earnest inquiry, continual seriousness, and holy affection. One morning as I was walking through the churchyard, on my way to visit her, I stopped to look at the epitaph which had made such an impression on her mind. I was struck with the reflection of the important consequences which might result from a more frequent and judicious attention to the inscriptions placed in our burying-grounds, as memorials of the departed.

At one visit to Jane’s cottage, I found her in bed reading Isaac Watts’ Hymns for Children, in which she took great pleasure.

“What are you reading this morning, Jane?”

“Sir, I have been thinking very much about some verses in my book. Here they are:

There is an hour when I must die

Nor do I know how soon twill come;  
A thousand children young as I  
Are called by death to hear their doom.  
Let me improve the hours I have  
Before the day of grace is fled;  
There's no repentance in the grave  
Nor pardon offered to the dead.

Sir, I feel all that to be very true and I am afraid I do not improve the hours as I ought to do. I think I shall not live very long, and when I remember my sins, I say:

Lord, at Your feet, ashamed I lie  
Upward I dare not look;  
Pardon my sins before I die  
And blot them from Your book.

Do you think He will pardon me, Sir?"

"My dear child, I have great hopes that He has pardoned you, that He has heard your prayers, and has put you into the number of His true children already. You have strong proofs of His mercy to your soul."

"Yes, Sir, I have, and I wish to love and bless Him for it. He is good, very good. Sir, I do so love to hear of these things. And I think, Sir, I would not love them so much if I had no part in them. Sir, there is one thing I want to ask you. It is a great thing and I may be wrong. I am so young."

Here she hesitated and paused.

"What is it? do not be fearful of mentioning it."

A tear rolled down her cheek, a slight blush colored her countenance. She lifted up her eyes to heaven for a moment, and then fixing them on me with a solemn, affecting look, said "May so young a poor child as I am be admitted to the Lord's Supper? I have for some time wished it but dared not to mention it, for fear you should think it wrong."

"My dear Jane, I have no doubt respecting it and hope that He who has given you the desire will bless His own ordinance to your soul. Would you wish it now or tomorrow?"

"Tomorrow, if you please, Sir, I am growing faint now, I hope to be better when you come again."

I was so much affected with my last visit to little Jane, and particularly with her tender anxiety respecting the Lord's supper, that it formed the chief subject of my thoughts for the remainder of the day.

Disease was making rapid inroads upon her and she was aware of it. But as the outward man decayed, she was strengthened with might by God's Spirit in the inner man. She was evidently ripening fast for a better world.

The next morning I went to Jane's cottage. On entering the door the woman who so frequently visited her met me and said: "Perhaps, Sir, you will not wake her just yet, for she has dropped asleep and she seldom gets much rest, poor girl!"

I went gently upstairs. The child was in a half-sitting posture, leaning her head upon her right hand, with her Bible open before her. She had evidently fallen asleep while reading. Her countenance was beautifully composed and tranquil. A few tears had rolled down her cheek, and (probably unknown to her) dropped upon the pages of her bible.

I looked around me for a moment. The room was outwardly comfortless and uninviting; the walls and floor broken and uneven; the window broken in many places, and mended with patches of paper. There was no furniture but a three-legged stool, and an old oak chest. A little shelf against the wall, over the bedstead where Jane lay, served for her medicine, her food, and her books. "Yet here" I said to myself, "lies an heir of glory, waiting for a happy dismissal. This poor chamber is a palace in the eye of faith!"

I approached without waking her and observed that she had been reading the twenty-third chapter of Luke. The finger of her left hand lay upon the book, pointing at these words: "Lord remember me when You come into Your kingdom." In a moment, I discovered that her finger was indeed an index to the thoughts of her heart.

She half awoke from her dozing state, but not sufficiently to perceive that any person was present and said in a kind of whisper: "Lord remember me, remember me, remember, remember a poor child, Lord remember me."

She then suddenly startled and perceived me as she became fully awake, a faint blush overspread her cheeks for a moment, and then disappeared.

"How long have I been asleep? Sir, I am very sorry."

"And I am very glad to find you thus," I replied.

"What were you reading?"

"The history of the crucifying of Jesus, Sir."

"How far had you read, when you fell asleep?"

"To the prayer of the thief that was crucified with Him and thought what a mercy it would be if the Lord Jesus would remember me likewise, and so I fell asleep; and I fancied in my dream that I saw Christ upon the cross. And I thought I said: 'Lord remember me,' and I am sure He did not look angry upon me."

All this seemed to be a sweet commentary on the text, and a most suitable forerunner of our intended sacramental service.

The time was sweet and solemn. I went through the sacramental service. The countenance and manner of the child evinced powerful feelings. Tears mingled with smiles, resignation brightened by hope, humility animated by faith, a childlike modesty adorned with the understanding of a riper age, gratitude, peace, devotion, patience, all these were visible.

“My mercies are great, very great, Sir, greater than I can express. I thank you for this favor. Sir, I shall never forget this day.”

“Neither I think shall I.”

“Sir,” said the child, “I wish you could speak to my mother when you come again. I am so grieved about her soul and I am afraid she cares nothing at all about it herself.”

“I hope I shall have an opportunity the next time I come. Farewell, my child.”

“Goodbye, Sir, and I thank you for all your kindness to me.”

“Surely,” I thought as I left the cottage, this young bud of grace will bloom beautifully in paradise! May the Lord transplant her there in His own good time! Yet if it be his will, may she live a little longer, that I may further profit by her conversation and example.”

Memory reflects with gratitude, while I write, on the profit and consolation which I individually derived from her society. Nor I alone. The last day will, if I err not, disclose further fruits of the love of God to this little child; and, through her, to others that saw her. And may not hope indulge the prospect, that this simple memorial of her history shall be as one arrow drawn from the quiver of the Almighty, to reach the hearts of the young and thoughtless? Direct its course, O my God! May the eye that reads, and the ear that hears, the record of little Jane, each become a witness for the truth as it is in Jesus!

I remembered the tender solicitude of this dear child for her mother. I well knew what an awful contrast the dispositions and conduct of her parents exhibited, when compared with her own.

One morning, I arrived at the stile nearly adjoining her dwelling. The upper window was open, and I soon distinguished the sound of voices. I entered the house, unperceived by those above stairs, and sat down below, not wishing as yet to interrupt a conversation which quickly caught my ear.

“Mother! mother! I have not long to live. My time will be very short. But I must, indeed I must, say something for your sake before I die. O mother! you have a soul, you have a soul! What will become of it when you die? O my mother, I am so uneasy about your soul!”

“O dear! I shall lose my child, she will die! What shall I do when you are gone, my child?” She sobbed aloud.

“Mother, think about your soul. Have not you neglected that?”

“Yes, I have been a wicked creature, and hated all that was good. What can I do?”

“Mother, you must pray to God to pardon you for Christ’s sake. You must pray!”

“Jenny, my child, I cannot pray; I never did pray in all my life. I am too wicked to pray.”

“Mother, I have been wanting to speak to you a long time. But I was afraid to do it. You did not like me to say anything about religion, and I did not know how to begin. But indeed, mother, I must speak now, or it may be too late. I wish Mr. Richmond was here, for he could talk to you better than I can. But perhaps you will think of what I say, poor as it is, when I am dead. I am but a young child, and not fit to speak about such things to anybody. But mother, I cannot bear to think of your perishing forever! My Savior has shown me the way to heaven. I hope I shall see Him there; but I want to see you there too, mother. Do, please do, leave off swearing and other bad ways; go to church and hear our minister speak about Jesus Christ, and what He has done for wicked sinners. He wishes well to souls. He taught me the way, and he will teach you, mother. Do not be angry with me, mother; I only speak for your good!”

“Yes, my child, you were always a good girl, and minded your bible.”

“No, mother, no; not always. I cared nothing about God or my Bible until the minister came, and sent for us, as you know, on Saturday afternoons. Don’t you remember, mother, that at first you did not like me to go, and said you would have no such pious doings about your house; and that I had better play about the streets and fields, than be laughed at and made fun of? Ah, mother, you did not know what I went for, and what God designed for me and my poor sinful soul. But, thank God, I did go, and there learned the way of salvation. Mother, I wish you had learned too!”

As I listened to this affecting conversation, I rejoiced to hear such weighty and important exhortation dropping from the daughter’s lips. I felt that present circumstances rendered it far more valuable than my own could have been.

At this moment the front door opened, and a younger child, a brother of Jane, came in.

The mother asked from above who it was, the boy replied, and without further inquiry, she remained in the chamber. I beckoned the lad to sit down quietly; and thus it remained unknown that I was below.

“Mother!” continued Jane, “that is my brother, and will soon be your only remaining child. Do, please, encourage him to follow godly ways. Send him to Mr. Richmond, and he will be kind to him as he has been to me. He is a wild boy, but

I hope he will be brought to think about his soul. Those naughty wicked boys teach him to swear and fight, and run after all manner of evil. Lord, help him to flee from the wrath to come!”

I made a sign to the boy to listen to what his sister said concerning him. He seemed to hear with attention, and a tear dropped down his cheek.

“Ah, Jenny, it is to be hoped he will, and that we all shall likewise.”

“Mother, then you must flee to Christ. Nothing you can do will save you without that. You must repent and turn from sin, without the grace of God you cannot do it; but seek and you shall find it. Do, for your own sake, and for my sake, and my little brother’s sake!”

The woman wept and sobbed without replying. I now thought it time to appear, and went to the bottom of the stairs, and said, “May a friend come up?”

“Oh,” said the mother, “that is Mr. Richmond.”

The woman looked confused. Jane smiled as I entered, and welcomed me as usual.

“Come in, Sir,” said Jane; “I am very glad you have come.”

“I hope I shall be forgiven, both by mother and daughter, for having remained so long downstairs, during the conversation which has just taken place. I came in the hope of finding you together, as I have had a wish for some time past to speak to you, Sarah, on the same subjects about which, I am happy to say, your daughter is so concerned. You have long neglected these things, and I wish to warn you of the danger of your state; but Jenny has said all I could desire, and I now solemnly ask you whether you are not much affected by your poor child’s faithful conversation? You ought to have been her teacher and instructor in the ways of righteousness; whereas now she has become yours. Look at your dying child, and think of your other and only remaining one, and say whether this sight does not call aloud upon you to hear and fear.”

Jane’s eyes were filled with tears while I spoke. The woman hung her head down, but showed some emotions of dislike, at the plain dealing used towards her.

“Jane” said I, “how are you today?”

“Sir, I have been talking a good deal, and feel rather faint and weary, but my mind has been very easy and happy since I last saw you. I am quite willing to die, when the Lord sees fit. I have no wish to live, except it be to see my friends walking in God’s way, before I depart. Sir, I used to be afraid to speak to them; but I feel today as if I could hold my peace no longer, and I must tell them what the Lord has done for my soul, and what I feel for theirs.”

There was a firmness, I may say a dignity, with which this was uttered, that surprised me. The character of the child seemed to be lost in that of the Christian; her natural timidity yielded to a holy assurance of manner, resulting from her own inward consolations, mingled with spiritual desire for her mother’s welfare. This produced a flush upon her otherwise pallid countenance, which much added to her interesting appearance. The Bible lay open before her as she sat up in the bed. With her right hand she enclosed her mother’s.

“Mother, you are unable to read this book, you should therefore go constantly to church, that you may hear it explained. It is God’s book, and tells us the way to heaven; I hope you will learn and mind it: with God’s blessing it may save your soul. Do think of that, mother, please do. I am soon going to die. Give this Bible to my brother. And will you be so kind Sir, as to instruct him?”

She was quite overcome, and sank away in a kind of fainting fit.

Her mother observed that she would now probably remain insensible for some time before she recovered.

I improved this interval in a serious address to the woman, and then prepared to take my departure, perceiving that Jane was too much exhausted for further conversation at that time.

As I was leaving the room, the child said faintly, “Come again soon, Sir, my time is very short.”

I returned home, and silently meditated on the eminent proofs of piety and faith which were just afforded me in the scene I had witnessed. Surely, I thought, this is an extraordinary child! What cannot grace accomplish?

At a very early hour on the morning of the following day, I was awake by the arrival of a messenger, bringing an earnest request that I would immediately go to the child, as her end appeared to be just approaching.

It was not yet day when I left my house to obey the summons. The morning star shone conspicuously clear. The moon cast a mild light over the prospect, but gradually diminished in brightness as the eastern sky became enlightened. The birds were beginning their songs, and seemed ready to welcome the sun’s approach. The dew plentifully covered the fields, and hung in drops from the trees and hedges. A few early laborers appeared in the lanes, traveling towards the scene of their daily occupations.

The rays of the morning star were not so beautiful in my sight as the spiritual lustre of this young Christian’s character. Her night was far spent; the morning of a better day was at hand. The sun of eternal blessedness was ready to break upon her soul with rising glory. Like the moon, which I saw above me, this child’s exemplary deportment had gently cast a useful light over the neighborhood where she dwelt. Like this moon she had for a season been permitted to shine amidst the surrounding darkness; and her rays were also reflected from a luminary, in whose native splendor her own would

quickly be blended and lost. All was still and calm. My mind, as I proceeded, dwelt upon the affecting events which I expected soon to witness.

On arriving at the house I found no one below. I paused for a few minutes and heard the girl's voice very faintly saying: "Do you think he will come? I would be so very glad to see him before I die."

I ascended the stairs, her father, mother, brother, and the woman who cared for her, were in the chamber. Jane's countenance bore the marks of a speedy death. The moment she saw me, a renewed vigor beamed in her eye; grateful affection sparkled in the dying face. For some time she was silent, but never took her eyes off me. At length she said: "This is very kind, Sir, I am going fast, I was afraid I would never see you again in this world."

I said, "My child, are you resigned to die?"

"Quite."

"Where is your hope?"

She lifted up her finger, pointed to heaven and then directed the same downward to her own heart, saying successively as she did so: "Christ there and Christ here." These words, accompanied by the action, spoke her meaning more solemnly than can easily be conceived.

A momentary spasm took place. Looking towards her weeping mother, she said, "I am very cold, but it is no matter, it will soon be over." Then she said to me, "I wish, Sir, when I am gone, that you would tell the children of the parish how good the Lord has been to me, a poor sinner. Tell them that those who seek Him early will find Him. Tell them that the ways of sin and ignorance, are the ways to ruin and hell. And please, tell them from me, Sir, that Christ is indeed the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He will never cast out any who come."

"My dear child, you will soon be forever in His arms, who is now guiding you by His rod and staff through the valley of the shadow of death."

"I believe so, indeed, I do," said she, "I long to be with Him, Jesus, save me, help me through this last trial."

She then gave one hand to her father, the other to her mother, and said: "God bless you, God bless you, seek the Lord, you cannot know what I have felt for both of you. Lord, pardon and save my dear father and mother."

She then took hold of her brother's hand, saying, "Thomas, I beg you to leave off your bad ways. Read the Bible, I give you mine. May the Lord turn your heart to love and follow Him."

To the woman who cared for her, she said: "I thank you, for all your kindness since I have been ill. I hope the Lord will remember you for it, according to His rich mercy."

"Ah, my child," said the woman, "I wish I was as fit to die as you are, but I fear that will never be, my sins have been many, very many."

"Christ's blood cleanses from all sin," said the child.

At this moment, instead of growing weaker, through the fatigue of so much speaking, she seemed to gather fresh strength. She turned to me with a look of surprising earnestness and animation, saying, "You, Sir, have been my best friend on earth. You have taught me the way to heaven and I love and thank you for it. You have spoken to me of the love of Christ, and He has made me to feel it in my heart. I shall see Him face to face! He will never leave me nor forsake me. He is the same and changes not. Dear Sir, God bless you."

The child suddenly rose up with an unexpected exertion, threw her ashen, wasted arms around me as I sat on the bedside, laid her head on my shoulder and said distinctly: "God bless and reward you. Give thanks for me to Him. My soul is saved. Christ is everything to me. Sir, we shall meet in heaven, shall we not? Oh yes, yes, then all will be peace .. peace .. peace."

She sank back on the bed, and spoke no more. She drew a deep sigh, smiled and died.

For some time I remained silently gazing on the breathless corpse, and could hardly persuade myself that Jane was indeed no longer there.

As I returned homeward, I found it difficult to repress the strong feelings of affection which such a scene had excited. Neither did I wish it. Jesus Himself wept over the coming sorrows of Jerusalem. He wept also at the grave of his friend Lazarus. Such an example consecrates the tear of affection, while it teaches us, 'concerning those who are asleep, not to sorrow, as those which have no hope.'

I soon fell into meditation on the mysterious subject of the flight of a soul from this world to that of departed spirits. Swifter than an arrow from a bow, or than the rays of light from the sun, has this child's spirit hastened, in obedience to its summons from God, to appear in His immediate presence! What a change for her! from that poor tattered chamber, to the regions of paradise! from a bed of straw, to the bosom of Abraham!

I have lost a young disciple, endeared to me by a tender tie. Yet how can I complain of that as lost, which God has found? Her willing and welcome voice no longer seeks or imparts instruction here. But it is far better employed. Why then should I mourn? The whole prospect, as it concerns her, is filled with joy and immortality, 'Death is swallowed up in victory!'

As I looked upon the dew-drops which rested on the grass and hung from the branches of the trees, I observed that the sun's rays first filled them with beautiful and varied colors; then dried them up, and they were seen no longer.

Thus it was with myself. The tears which I neither would nor could restrain, when I first began thus to reflect on the image of dead little Jane, were speedily brightened by the vivid sunshine of hope and confidence. They then gradually yielded to the influence of that divine principle which shall finally wipe the tear from every eye, and banish all sorrow and sighing for evermore.

On the fourth day from thence, Jane was buried. The attendants were not many, but I was glad to perceive among them some of the children who had been accustomed to receive my weekly private instruction along with her.

As I stood at the head of the grave, during the service, I connected past events, which had occurred in the churchyard, with the present. In this spot Jane first learned the value of that gospel which saved her soul. Not many yards from her own burial-place, was the epitaph which has already been described as the first means of affecting her mind with serious and solemn conviction.

The evening was serene, nothing occurred to interrupt the quiet solemnity of the occasion.

'Peace' was the last word little Jane uttered while living; and peace seemed to be inscribed on the farewell scene at the grave where she was laid.

Attachment to the spot where this young Christian lay, induced me to plant a yew-tree, close by the head of her grave, adjoining the eastern wall of the church. I designed it as an evergreen monument of one who was dear to memory. The young plant appeared healthy for a while, and promised by its outward vigor long to retain its station. But it withered soon afterwards, and, like the child whose grave it pointed out to notice, early faded away and died.

The yew-tree proved a frail and short-lived monument. But a more lasting one dwells on my own heart. And perhaps this narrative may be permitted to transmit her memory to other generations, when the hand and heart of the writer shall be cold in the dust.

Perhaps some, into whose hands these pages may fall, will be led to cultivate their spiritual young plants, with increased hope of success in so arduous an endeavor. May the tender blossoms reward their care, and bring forth early and acceptable fruit!

While the parent, teacher, or minister, is occupied in this grateful task of laboring in his heavenly Master's garden, some blight, some tempest, may perhaps take away a favorite young blossom, in a premature stage of its growth.

If such a case should befall him, he will then perhaps, as I have often done, when standing in pensive recollection at little Jane's grave, make an application of these lines, which are inscribed on a grave-stone erected in the same churchyard—

"This lovely bud, so young and fair,  
Called hence by early doom,  
Just came to show how sweet a flower  
In Paradise would bloom."

A tribute of affection has been paid to the memory of the Young Cottager, by putting up a grave-stone, on which the following verses are inscribed:

"You who the power of God delight to trace,  
And mark with joy each monument of grace,  
Tread lightly o'er this grave, as you explore  
The short and simple Annals of the Poor!  
A child reposes underneath this sod—  
A child to memory dear, and dear to God;  
Rejoice! yet shed the sympathetic tear;  
Jane, 'the Young Cottager,' lies buried here."