

The Retrospect.

Oh! selfish tears! who would unglorify
The Sainted Pilgrim? His unruffled bliss
Disturb, and pluck the crown from off his brow,
To bring him back to earth?—"We sorrow not
As those who have no hope."—Fallen he has
"Asleep in Jesus!" pillow'd on the bosom
Of uncreated Love! basking for ever
Beneath the sunshine of Jehovah's smile.
Sorrows all ended—wiped from every eye
The ling'ring tear-drop—immortality
Begun; a golden harp, and sparkling crown,
And palm unfading; with Immanuel's praise
The tongue seraphic—(ever-deep'ning anthems
Of which imagination cannot catch
The distant echo!) Shall the selfishness
Of earthly sorrow interrupt that song,
Or break that holy rest? "Asleep in Jesus!"
(What music in the words!) Hark to the strain
In gentle cadence stealing from the skies:—

“Mourners! why shed for me mistaken tears?
If ye did love me, ye would now rejoice,
Because I said, I go unto my Father!”

Wondrous transition in life's closing hour!
The burden'd Pilgrim of his Cross released,
And carried to his Crown! Upon a world
Of woe, Earth's curtain falling, to arise
Anew on realms of glory! Who, with heart
Unmoved, can gaze upon the solemn scene
Of nature's dissolution? Who forget
Those moments—more like hours—of dread
suspense,
When, seated with a bursting tide of anguish
By the toss'd pillow of some loved one's couch,
Watching the herald symptoms of the tomb
Fast gathering around! The Lamp of Life
Is feebly flickering; upon the brink
Of a receding world the Spirit hovers;
The sand-glass hastens to its final grain!
'Tis the last struggle! Yet, oh! can it be?
Nature recoils from the sad inference!
Fallacious hope still clings—but clings in vain—
To every beat of the exhausted pulse!

It is—it is too true! The conflict's o'er——
Mourner! that moment's pang of agony
Tongue ne'er can tell, when call'd, with trembling
 lips,
A sad farewell to lisp! thy spirit lone
Drifting on life's rude sea a shatter'd wreck!

Yet tell me what thy spirit first assuaged,
When the fresh torrent of thy grief had spent
Its rolling tears? Say, was it not to soar
Upon the wings of faith, and hear the voice—
Silent on earth—uniting in the songs
Of Heav'n? That Saint has wept his final tear—
Heaved his last pang!—Earth's closing draught
 of sorrow
Has been exhausted; open'd have these eyes
Upon the glories of a tearless world!
The ear insensible to earthly sounds
Has caught celestial melody, and Death
Has proved the harbinger of endless bliss,—
The Birthday of Eternity! The hour
Which marks the close of his existence here,
In truth, the Christian's life (as charter'd heir
And denizen of Immortality),

Begins. And if we festive keep the day
Of the frail body's entrance into life,
And earthly friends are gather'd in to offer
Their joyous gratulations, shall it be
With tears we celebrate the natal hour
Of the undying spirit, entering
A Sinless, Deathless, Sorrowless for-ever?

Earth may indulge in tears, but Heaven has
none.

The doleful sackcloth'd chamber may resound
With lamentation; but that sad farewell
Has waken'd up a Jubilee on high;
And the glad accents burst from every tongue:—
“Welcome an heir of Immortality!”

Bereaved Mother! mourning o'er the loss
Of a departed child,—a Flower soon pluck'd
(But not too soon for glory), which distill'd
Celestial fragrance on thy path below,
Weep not! but let thy envied boast be this,—
“I am the parent of a ransom'd Saint!”
Bright Beacon-light, set on the Heavenly shore,
To which in many a deep, dark night of sorrow,

Oft thou may'st turn thine eye; its hallow'd
radianc

Cheering thy shatter'd bark across the waves
Betwixt thee intervening and the haven
Of thine eternal rest! Thrice sacred tie!
That Spirit, which delighted while on earth,
Like the magnetic needle to its pole,
To point thee oft to Jesus, still directs
To the same glorious Source of heavenly love,
Of joy in sorrow, victory in death!
Oh! is it no incentive when thou think'st
That in the lustrous crowd of Witnesses
Which line the battlements on high, are those
Who lighted once with their perennial smile
This wilderness—still from their lofty seats,
Stooping to woo us with their crowns of bliss?
The Bride says, "Come!"—A sweetly-mingled
voice

Of sainted Parents—Brothers, Sisters—Friends,
Stealing in holy music from the skies
(In the soft whispers of celestial love),
And telling, though they "cannot come to us,"
There is a meeting-place in brighter climes,
Which knows no parting!

To that ransom'd one,
The "why" and "wherefore" of God's mystic
dealings,

Already is unfolded : That which clothed
An earthly home in sadness, will to him
Radiant be now with cov'nant love ; great ends
And righteous purposes therein reveal'd,
Almost by intuition, which will give
New matter and new theme for endless praise !
While we, short-sighted mortals, "through a glass
Darkly beholding," often thus exclaim :
"Great God ! thy judgments are a mighty deep !"
Oh ! as the glorified behold His ways
Seen in the Mirror of Eternity,
It is the golden harp with bolder hand
To sweep, and swell the chorus of the Skies,
"All Holy ! Holy ! Holy ! is the Lord !"

But if the Spirit's blessedness be such,
What of the body ?—mortal tenement
(Mortal and frail), yet loved—oh ! yes, how loved !
Each feature pencill'd as with living light
On the Soul's tablets ineffaceable,
Smiles that can never die ! Say, can it be

That all now left of these is memory?
Say, as thou stood'st amid the crowd of Mourners
Around the silent grave, busied each eye
Writing with tears a deeper epitaph
Than human hand e'er wrote or chisel traced;
When the descending earth (as if it join'd
With hollow voice to chaunt the requiem)
Drew the dull echo from the coffin-lid,
Proclaiming that the "dust had now return'd
To dust!" Say, was that death-sound a farewell
That closed your eyes for ever on the form
You cherish'd once so fondly?—God forbid!
That crumbling framework crumbles but to live!
Immanuel's blood, which bought the Soul, has paid
The ransom of the body. Does not faith
The startling notes anticipate,—the trump
Which is to wake the echoes of the world,
And from their mansions, mould'ring in cold clay,
Evoke the slumb'ring myriads? The dust
Of ages lives! "With Immortality
The mortal's clothed," and "swallow'd up is Death
In Victory!" The Body "*sleeps*," yet not
In an eternal night—(cheerless extinction
That knows no morn!)—But like the chrysalis

Lying embedded in its torpid shell,
Escaping winter storms to burst anew
With wings expanded in the glorious light
Of an unclouded Summer; from the flowers
Which bloom unfading loveliness, to cull
Immortal fragrance! Say not, then, that o'er
The dying moments of thy Friend was wept
A last adieu, and that the heavy word
"Farewell!" was burden'd with the awful
thought,—

"This parting is *for ever*." Say not, there
Thou didst receive the closing look of love;
And that the grasp which told of an affection
Death could not quench, was to be felt no more!
No! for these clay-cold lips with deathless smiles
Shall be relighted, and these rayless eyes!
And with a glorious similitude
Each feature shall remind thee of earth's love,
With this distinction, that they cannot fade!
Thine ears, once more, shall listen to the voice
Whose music soothed thee oft below, attuned
For higher themes and loftier minstrelsy;
Hand link'd in hand, climbing the upward steep
Of Zion hill, with mutual joy recounting

Jehovah's dealings, since the day which sever'd
Earth's bonds of love. But, oh! the rapt'rous bliss,
To think these bonds can now no more be broken!
Exulting in espousals which can know
No dissolution; underneath the throne
Bathed in the full-orb'd glory of your God!

I love to think of this identity
Between the Saint on earth and Saint in heaven.
That soul and body (only glorified
And liberate from sin) shall rise the same
As once they moved while here! Each holy trait
Which may adorn the character below,—
The tenderness and love of guileless nature,—
Shall not be lost, but made susceptible
Of infinite progression, shall attain
Their full development. That sacred glow
Of sensibility which shed on earth
A halo round the spirit:—warm emotions,
Once lavish'd on the creature of a day,—
Shall with increasing fervour gravitate
Towards the great Creator! Intellect
With energies immortal, fathoming
Perfections infinite—Redeeming Love!
Uniting in the anthem-peal, whose thunders

Ten thousand times ten thousand voices swell,
"Worthy the Lamb!"

Repose, then, Precious clay!
Thou art in safer custody than mine,
The purchase of atoning blood! What though
The sods of earth now cover thee, and rage
The elements around thee? Angels watch
The sleeping dust; nay, more, Omnipotence
Is th' invisible Guardian of thy tomb!
Jesus! The Mighty Conqueror of Death,
Who felt its pow'r and pluck'd its sting away,
Drying our tears, addresses us in words
Which glow with immortality: "Fear not!
For I am He that liveth and was dead,
Behold! I am alive forevermore;
And in my hand retain the Keys of Death!"
Then looking forward through the dim perspective
Of this dark Vale of weeping, let the eye
Rest on the splendours of that cloudless morn,
When the Archangel's pealing notes shall startle
A slumb'ring earth; the Sea and Land restore
At the loud summons what they hold in trust,
And o'er a renovated world resound
The pæans of Eternal Victory!