

# DEATH'S VISITS

TO THE

## VILLAGE.

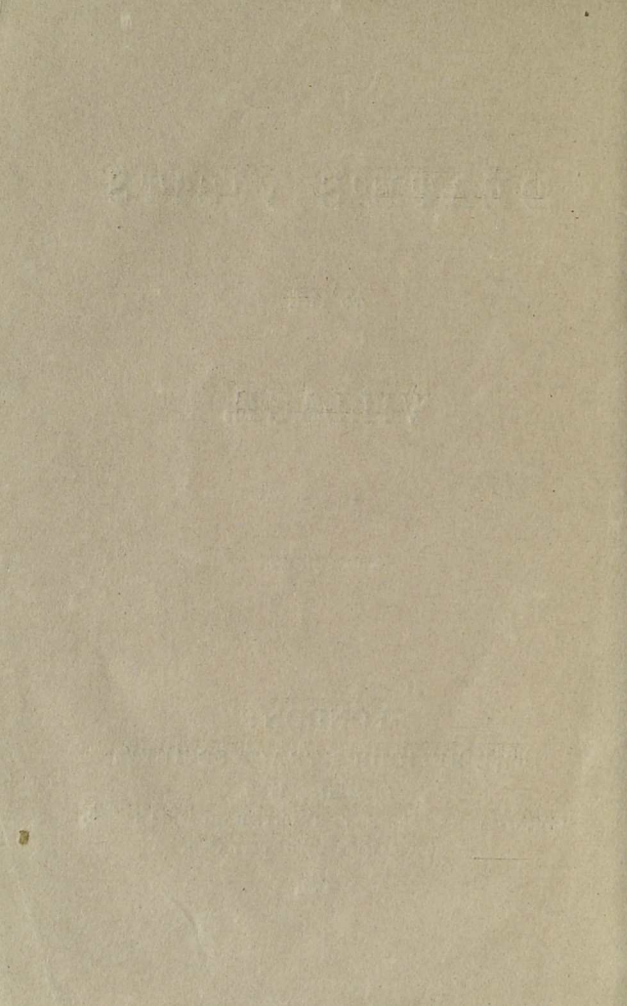


LONDON:

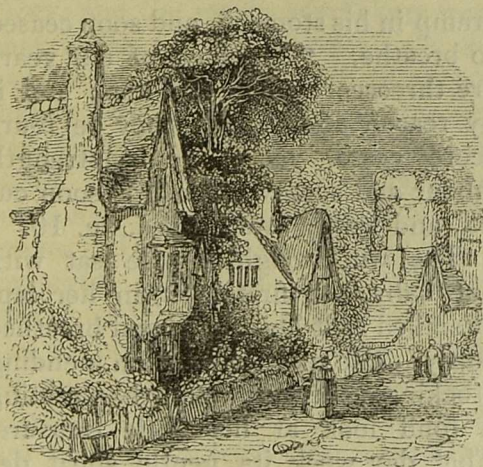
THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY;

*Instituted 1799.*

DEPOSITORY, 56, PATERNOSTER ROW, AND 65,  
ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD.



## DEATH'S VISITS TO THE VILLAGE.



DEATH came up the village ; it was in the SPRING ; the fresh leaves were budding forth, and the snowdrops were peeping out of the ground. He went into the thatched cottage by the

ash tree, where sat old Roger Gough in his arm-chair, with his brow wrinkled, and his hair white as flax. Roger was taken with the cramp in his stomach, and soon ceased to breathe. "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away," Psa. xc. 10.

The wheelwright's wife sat with her baby, her first-born, in her lap. It smiled as it lay asleep, and breathed softly. The mother went on mending stockings, every now and then casting a fond look at her little treasure. That day week its gentle spirit departed, leaving its fond parents half heart-broken. How uncertain is human life! "It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away," James iv. 14.

Death went down the village in the SUMMER ; the heavens were bright with sunbeams, and the earth seemed to smile ; the gardens were in their glory, and the merry haymakers were busy in the fields. The sexton's son had long been ailing, and all agreed that he could never struggle through the winter. The red tinge on his cheek was not of a healthy hue ; consumption had marked him for the grave. He had taken to his bed a fortnight, when his head fell back gently on his pillow, and he went off like an infant going to sleep. " As for man, his days are as grass : as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone ; and the place thereof shall know it no more," Psa. ciii. 15, 16.

Butcher Hancocks was the strongest man in the parish. His chest was broad, his arms sinewy and strong,



and his frame bulky and well knit together. "As hearty as Hancocks," was a common saying. No matter! sickness soon robs the stoutest of his strength, and pulls down the tallest man to the ground. The fever fastened upon him, so that one hour he raged with heat and thirst, and the next his teeth chattered with cold: the strong man soon bowed before the stroke of Death.

Death crossed the village in the AUTUMN; the orchard trees were bending beneath their load, the sickle was at work among the wheat, and the scythe was sweeping down the barley. Never was known a more abundant year. Farmer Blount was a wealthy man. He was in the corn-field with the reapers when he suddenly fell to the ground. Some said that he was struck by the sun, and others that it was a fit of apoplexy; but

whatever it was, Farmer Blount never spoke after. Truly may each of us say, "There is but a step between me and death," 1 Sam. xx. 3.

Widow Edwards lived in the shed, at the back of the pound. It was a wretched habitation; but the poor cannot choose their dwelling-places. The aged widow had wrestled hard with poverty: her bits and drops were few and far between. Her son, who ought to have been a staff for her old age to rest on, was at sea. Death found the widow alone, lying on the straw. No one was at hand to comfort her or to close her eyes. "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come," Matt. xxiv. 42.

Death went round the village in the WINTER; the icicles were a foot long, hanging from the pent-house in the carpenter's yard, and the snow

lay here and there in heaps, for it had been shovelled away from the front of the cottages. Not a stone's throw from the finger-post, at the entrance of the village, dwelt Abel Froome, the clerk's father. For years he had been afflicted, but his mind was stayed upon Christ, the Rock of Ages, and he loved to think of eternal things. He had lived to a goodly old age, and as a shock of corn ripe for the harvest, he was ready to be gathered into the garner. He had applied his heart unto wisdom, and he knew Him whom to know is eternal life. Death found him sitting up in his bed with the Bible in his aged hands, and the last words that faltered from his lips were, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation," Luke ii. 29, 30.

The habitation of Harry Tonks



was in a wretched plight when Death crossed the threshold. Harry was an infidel, and scoffed at holy things. His days were mostly spent in idleness, and his nights in poaching or in tippling. Often had Harry defied Death at a distance, but when he came in reality, he trembled like a child. Pain racked him, and poverty distressed him; but that was not all, for his conscience was at work within him, and his mind was disturbed. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?" Prov. xviii. 14. It was a horrid sight to see Harry clenching his hands, tearing his clothes, gnashing his teeth in anguish; and quite as bad to hear the curses he uttered in his despair. He died as the wicked die, without hope, "driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world," Job. xviii. 18.

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If thus Death goes up and down, and across and around the village at all seasons of the year ; if he takes away the young and the old, the feeble and the strong, the rich and the poor, the righteous and the wicked, how long will he pass by thee ? Surely, he is every moment approaching nearer and nearer to thee ! Is it thy prayer, " Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his ? " Numb. xxiii. 10. Is Christ thy hope, thy trust, and thy salvation ? Dost thou expect to live because he died for thee ? Art thou trusting wholly in him ? If so, thou mayest indeed rejoice, and say with exultation, " Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil : for thou art with me ; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me," Psa. xxiii. 4.

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