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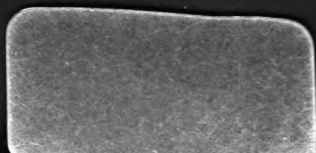
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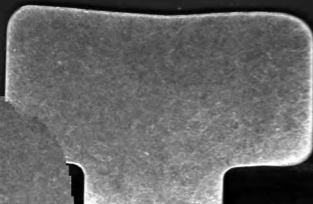


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COMFORT
FOR THE DESPONDING.

When sorrow all our heart would ask,
We need not shun our daily task
And hide ourselves for calm ;
The herbs we seek to heal our woe,
Familiar by our pathway grow,
Our common air is balm."

KEBLE.

"Despair not ! In the vale of woe,
Where many joys from suffering flow,
Oft breathes simoom, and close behind
A breath of God doth softly blow ;
To thee hath time brought many joys,
And many it has bid to go,
And season'd here with bitterness
Thy cup, that flat it should not grow.
Trust in that veil'd hand, which leads
None by the path that he would go ;
And always be for change prepared,
For the world's law is ebb and flow."

DEAN TRENCH

COMFORT
FOR THE DESPONDING;

OR,

WORDS TO SOOTHE AND CHEER
TROUBLED HEARTS.

EDINBURGH:
WILLIAM P. NIMMO.

1864.

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Edinburgh: Printed by Ballantyne & Company.

Prayer.

Consider my *affliction*, God, have mercy
And redeem me,
According to the greatness
Of Thy paternal love.

Let me, Lord, by Thy fatherly grace,
Find mercy
For the sins ;
Blot out, FATHER, my guilt.

Wash me, LORD, from my *leprosy*,
Then my sins
Are no more ;
Wash me continually more and more.

Oh that Thy SON, (*not the rod,*)
With His sacred blood,
Cleanse me
From stains that cover me!

Cast me, O my God, cast me not from Thee :
Behold my crying :
Take not Thy
Holy Spirit from me.

Let sinners take my example—
Learn to forsake
Their ways,
And return back again to THEE.

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Help in Trouble.

2 COR. iv. 17.

“For our *light affliction*, which is but for a moment, *worketh* for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

ISA. liv. 10.

“For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed ; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.”

Ps. cxxxviii. 7.

“Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me : thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me.”

Ps. xxvii. 5.

“In the time of trouble he shall hide me in his *pavilion*.”

HEB. xiii. 6.

“So that we may boldly say, the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”

ISA. lxvi. 13.

“As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you.”

**“What God decrees, child of His love,
Take patiently, though it may prove
The storm that wrecks thy treasure here
Be comforted ! thou need’st not fear
What pleases God.**

**“The wisest will is God’s own will ;
Rest on this anchor and be still ;
For peace around thy path shall flow,
When only wishing here below
What pleases God.**


**“The truest heart is God’s own heart,
Which bids the grief and fear depart,
Protecting, guiding, day and night,
The soul that welcomes here aright
What pleases God.**

**“Oh ! could I sing as I desire,
My grateful heart should never tire,
To tell the wondrous love and power,
Thus working out from hour to hour
What pleases God.**

**“The King of kings, He rules the earth,
He sends us sorrow here or mirth,
He bears the ocean in His hand ;
And thus we meet, on sea or land,
What pleases God.”**

Ps. xvi. 1.

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”

 attempt to prove that man is exposed to trouble, and that man when in trouble *needs help*, would be really a sort of mockery.

Eliphaz, the Temanite, one of Job's friends, was wrong in applying his argument to Job ; but he did not at all misrepresent man's condition, when he said, “Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground, yet man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward.”

How uncommon to find any who say, “We have never known trouble !” Sometimes some one begins a sentence, “I may say, I scarcely knew trouble *till*”—then comes the mention of some trouble indeed, “that first bereavement, that crushing calamity, that serious illness, or that deep, sharp, first conviction of sin and sense of danger

for the soul." With others life has been, throughout a series of years, a succession of heavy troubles,—wave rolling after wave, storm following storm,—each trouble in some sense heavier than the preceding, because of the increased accumulation.

And hence some err in judgment, like Job's friends, and fancy that where there are the heaviest troubles there must have been the greatest sins. "I know not what I have done," said a young man leaning on crutches, with his health gone, and his power of supporting himself gone with it. "I know not what I have done," he said to me, with a countenance shewing an embittered spirit—"why God should send me such heavy troubles." I tried to teach him what may be the wise and loving purpose of God, afflicting in order to *profit* us, by drawing us to Himself through Christ our Saviour.

But, I said, it is needless, it is also superfluous, to prove that we are exposed to trouble.

We need help. Is it enough to have *human* help in trouble? Man can but minister help as God permits; man's help is very limited indeed; many troubles are

far beyond his effectual help. How little he can do in *mental troubles!* And outward troubles are chiefly troubles as they press upon the mind. What miserable comforters are wordly friends to one whose mind is deadened with anxiety! How poor their topics of comfort! How chilling their philosophy! It is often little better than stoical apathy or brutish insensibility.

For the whole class of spiritual troubles, from the first conviction of sin, to the last conflict between the flesh and the spirit, the worldly can give no help. That conviction they would bid you drown in dissipation,—that conflict they would stupefy with narcotics. And then spiritually-minded men will all testify they can help only as instruments for God. They disclaim all idea of helping in any other way. “Being helped, we help; comforted, we comfort.” Looking, with John the Baptist, to Jesus for help, we say, with him, to you, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!”

But God is our “help in trouble.” Why look for help hither and thither, where it cannot be found, to the neglect of Him who alone can help effectually? Only think, if in your

trouble you could have the *richest* of men to come and help to relieve your poverty, and the *strongest* of men to minister to your bodily weakness, and the *wisest* of men to counsel you in perplexity, you would deem it a privilege and a favour. That you cannot have ; and even *that*, if you could have it, might prove very insufficient help. But here you may have God in all the riches of His grace : God in all the energy of His almighty power ; God in all the wisdom of His omniscience, to be your "help in trouble." And that not a God afar off, but "*present*," close at hand, ready to dwell and work in you, speaking to your heart, applying to your soul His divine consolations and support. "Under me are the everlasting arms ;" yea, you may find "God a very present help in trouble."

You observe the climax of goodness ; God is "a help"—God is "a *present* help"—God is "a *very* present help in trouble." Can language be more expressive ? Can heart desire more ?

It would be easy to illustrate this from the dealings of God with His people as recorded in Scripture. To shew how Abraham, so

tried and troubled, was yet so comforted of God ; how Jacob, who at one time exclaimed, "All these things are against me," would now testify, "All these things were worked together for my good ;" how David, so persecuted by Saul, was so preserved by the providence and comforted by the grace of God ; how New Testament saints join in with more ancient believers, to swell the concert of praise to a faithful, covenant-keeping God, as their "refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

Reader, I rather want your testimony. I long for you also to know God in *your* present and future trouble. You are in trouble now. It is quite enough to tell you so ; there is no need of describing the trouble which oppresses so heavily. And now, I ask you, Do you know our God? You have heard of Him I know "by the hearing of the ear." But do you know Him by your own faith and experience, as "our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble?" Remember, your experience is not only for your own life and comfort, but also for the attraction of strangers to Christ,—for the encouragement of weaker brethren,—for the edification

of the whole Church of the faithful, and to glorify the all-sufficient grace of God. Abide ye, then, in Christ, your safe refuge. "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." Glorify God in the fires of tribulation. Treasure up past and present experience for future encouragement. Trust God also for others—for all your fellow-believers. Encourage all the faithful to join their testimony with yours—"God is our strength." Remember Martin Luther, who, when he and his brother-Reformers were in some new trouble, things seeming to go against them, used to exhort Melancthon and the rest, "Come, let us sing the forty-sixth Psalm." And he made a note, I have been told, against this Psalm, in the margin of his Psalter—"This is my comforting Psalm." So, in our day, in the progress of our revived reformation, when the clouds sometimes look dark, and some friends prove faithless, and others faint, let us refer to this comforting Psalm: "We will not fear." We will "be still and know that he is God;" and more, we will *sing* in the fiercest tumult, "The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge."

“Gracious and Almighty Redeemer, Thy love passeth knowledge. Oh, keep me near Thy heart now, henceforth, and for ever; and speedily root out all the enmity of man against Thee, and glorify Thy name in the submission, homage, and affection of the world. Amen and amen.”

“Leaning on Thee, my Guide and Friend,
My gracious Saviour! I am blest;
Tho’ weary, Thou dost condescend
To be my rest.

“Leaning on Thee, with child-like faith,
To Thee the future I confide;
Each step of life’s untrodden path
Thy love will guide.

“Leaning on Thee, I breathe no moan
Though faint with languor, parch’d with heat;
Thy will has now become my own—
That will is sweet.

“Leaning on Thee, ’midst torturing pain,
With patience Thou my soul dost fill;
Thou whisperest, ‘What did I sustain?’
Then I am still.

“Leaning on Thee, I do not dread
The havoc that disease may make;
Thou who for me Thy blood hast shed,
Wilt ne’er forsake.

“Leaning on Thee, no fear alarms;
Calmly I stand on death’s dark brink;
I feel ‘the everlasting arms,’
I cannot sink.”

DEUT. xxxiii. 27.

“Underneath are the Everlasting Arms.”

Pilgrims on the road to glory,
 Pressing toward the heavenly prize,
 'Mid the ills that now annoy you,
 'Mid the dangers that arise,—
 When your way is dark and dreary,
 Rugged, fill'd with rude alarms,—
 When perplex'd, exhausted, weary,
Trust the “Everlasting Arms.”

When corroding cares oppress you,
 When the Tempter's darts assail,
 When your inbred foes distress you,
 When they threaten to prevail,
 When of human aid despairing,
 And no voice the tempest calms,
 Think of this—that underneath you
 Are the *“Everlasting Arms.”*

And when all below is closing,
 When you touch the chilling flood,
 When you feel the waters rising,
 You will find the promise good.
 Timid Christians, *venture on it,*
 Bid farewell to all alarms;
 'Tis enough that underneath you
 Are the *“EVERLASTING ARMS.”*

The Barked Fig-Tree.

Ps. cxix. 67.

“Before I was afflicted, I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.”

HEB. xii. 5, 8.

“My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him. If ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.”

DEUT. viii. 5.

“As a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee.”

JOB v. 6.

“Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground.”

HEB. xii. 11.

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

JOB v. 17.

“Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth; therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty.”

“ It is Thy hand, my God !
My sorrow comes from Thee,
I bow beneath Thy chastening rod ;
’Tis love that bruises me.

“ I would not murmur, Lord,
Before Thee I am dumb !
Lest I should breath one murmuring word,
To Thee for help I come.

“ My God ! Thy name is love,
A Father’s hand is Thine ;
With tearful eye, I look above,
And cry, ‘ Thy will be mine.’

“ I know Thy will is right,
Though it may seem severe ;
Thy path is still unsullied light,
Though dark it oft appear.

“ Jesus for me hath died ;
Thy Son Thou didst not spare,
His piercèd hands, His bleeding side,
Thy love for me declare.

“ Here my poor heart can rest,
My God ! it cleaves to Thee ;
Thy will is love, Thine end is blest,
All work for good to me.”

JOEL, i. 7.

"He hath *barked my fig-tree.*"



HERE will be memory in heaven. Will Noah ever forget the Ark, or Abraham Mount Moriah, or Jacob his wrestling with the angel? No—never! Will Joseph ever forget the pit and the prison, or Moses the passage of the Red Sea, or the woman of Samaria the conversation at Jacob's well? No—never! Will Mary and Martha ever forget the village of Bethany, or Peter the look in Pilate's Hall, or Paul the road to Damascus, or John the Isle of Patmos? No—never! Now, one of the uses to which memory will be applied in the heavenly state will be to review the wisdom and goodness, condescension and truth, which have guided our career in the present world. Let us, then, for a few moments, take something like a review of the discipline of life with which we are familiar in a greater or less degree.

Every MAN HAS A FIG-TREE. We very

early become proprietors. We all have our fig-trees—all—whether born in a workhouse, or begotten in a palace.

What is a fig-tree? Something that we love ; something that we are fond of ; something that sends a living joy through the warm heart whenever we think of it. The fig-tree of one man is an *ample fortune* ; of another, *buoyant health* ; of another, *surprising success*—a brilliant prospect ; of another, a *beloved relative* ; of another, a *lovely child* ; of another, a *happy home*. The fig-tree of the infant is a choice toy ; of the child, a favourite companion ; of the studious youth, a school prize and college honours ; of the young man, a beautiful day-dream of future years ; of the lover, the betrothed ; of the bride, her husband ; of the mother, her first-born ; of the father, an only daughter. The fig-trees under which we severally sit are different in size, in foliage, and in fruit ; but every man has a fig-tree. Some of our fellow-creatures are so poor, and their life from the cradle to the grave such a struggle with misery, that we should hardly have thought that they could have had a fig-tree. But they have. The human heart was

made to love, and love it will, in spite of poverty, humiliation, and sorrow.

What is meant by barking of the fig-tree? Stripping it, *peeling it*, laying it bare and bleeding, and then the glorious fig-tree withers and dies. And so when this ample fortune is reduced, or this buoyant health is shattered, or this surprising success reversed, or these brilliant prospects clouded, or that beloved relative droops and dies, or that darling child is snatched from our embrace, or that happy home is turned into a house of mourning,—then have we the reality of which the saying is the picture—*the barking of the fig-tree*. Have you not seen the infant's toy broken, and the child's companion die, and the betrothed married to another, and the bride carried to her tomb, and the husband left a widower, and the wife become a widow, and the first-born carried away by death, and the only son become a prodigal? Have you never seen all this, and have you never heard the voice of an infant, and of a child, and of a youth, and of an adult, say, "*He hath barked my fig-tree?*"

Every man is liable to have his fig-tree barked. Are there no exceptions here?

None. If special friendship could have spared the fig-tree, Abraham would not have heard the command to offer his son, or distinguished honour have saved it; David would not have entered his palace, saying, "O Absalom, my son Absalom, would to God I had died for thee;" or pre-eminent inspiration and usefulness, Paul would not have felt the thorn in the flesh. There is no discharge in this war—"Every heart knoweth its own bitterness." There is not one, the fairest, and youngest, richest, and healthiest, whose feet, sooner or later, will not have to pass through the deep waters of the Divine chastisement. Pain and sorrow; disappointment and temptation; death and judgment await us all. But how are we prepared to meet them? Is it in reliance upon our own strength of will, or our own righteousness of life? If so, then, alas, for our souls! The feeble reed will snap beneath the hand that leans upon it; the foundation of sand will sink beneath the storm; the frail anchor will part when the tempest of judgment comes, and leave us amid the swelling floods of the great day, like a vessel that has drifted from its anchorage, the helpless prey of every wave.

Why does God bark our fig-tree? There are many *wise* and *gracious* purposes. One is to *promote consideration*. The great sin, danger, folly, and ruin of men is, that they will not *think*. They will hear, read, admire, applaud, but they will not think. Now, when God has a purpose of mercy towards any, He seems to say, "I am resolved that he shall think, and I will send him *that* which will make him think." Then comes the *barking of the fig-tree*. Then follows, thinking upon hitherto forgotten subjects,—the divine, the spiritual, the eternal. "Now, I see," says the stricken one, "that there is no friend like the friend that sticketh closer than a brother; no refuge like 'Jesus, refuge of my soul;' no rock like the 'rock of ages;' no treasure like the treasure in the skies. Fig-trees, farewell! I will away from you to God my Saviour, my everlasting home."

For the most part we refuse to listen to God in the time of health and prosperity. In the garden where flowers are blooming beautifully, and trees are waving freshly, we have seldom an ear for the voice of Him who pencilled every leaf and feathered every bough; but when the flowers are all withered, the

trees are stripped, and the garden is but a grave of what once it held, the most worldly mind is for a time subdued into listening unto God. It is as though the accents had been interrupted by the deep rich foliage, but could make their way now that the blight and the storm have done their stern office. And is it so that the beloved of our hearts must *die* before we can live. Must bough after bough of fragrant blossom and pleasant fruit be severed ; must the fig-tree be *barked* ere we are led to give to God our hearts, and to Christ our service ;—it is even so. The loss of wife, or children, or property, or health, has often resulted in untold blessings to the loser. It has produced in him religious thoughtfulness, and the eternal Spirit has made it the means and occasion of his conversion to God.

When God barks our fig-tree, it is to *explain the Scriptures*. But are not preachers, critics, commentators, the best interpreters of Scripture ? Nay, *heart-break* is the deepest teacher. What a different book is the Bible when the fig-tree is in its prime, from what it is when barked and withered ! How different when the mind is at *ease* is that

passage, "*Cast thy burden on the Lord,*" from what it is when crushed with a *load of care!* And when surrounded by *friends and helpers,* how different is that passage, "*I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,*" from what it is when deserted of all and left alone. How different when the family circle is unbroken is the voice from heaven, "*Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord,*" from what it is when death has made a gap in it. How much more power and life and peace in one case than in the other.

Who does not know how the Bible appears to open itself in the season of trouble. Its pages seem a hundredfold more irradiated when we have to darken our windows because death has crossed our doors, than when the full unclouded sun has poured upon us all its light. The Bible may be called a handbook for the afflicted. Nothing is better calculated to soothe sorrow and alleviate distress than its devout perusal. The greater part of it would be insipid to a man who never passed through trouble of any kind, for there would be in it comparatively little personally interesting to him. Set a man who knows nothing of trouble to preach a

sermon on the words, "Deep calleth unto deep ; at the noise of thy waterspouts all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." Set a man who never prayed in his life, who never lost a friend, who was never in any circumstances of deep sorrow and affliction, to give an exposition of the words, "Thou hast covered thy face with a cloud so that my prayer should not pass through." But let God by some terrible providence "*bark his fig-tree.*" Let a big cloud gather over his head,—make him feel that he cannot bring his dead child back to life,—that his wife will not hear him as she lies in her coffin,—that he cannot build his house again that was burnt down last night,—then he will understand the meaning of that lamentation, "Thou hast covered thy face with a cloud that my prayer should not pass through," and its relation to his own state. This is a glorious result.

The fig-tree is barked to teach *heavenly-mindedness*. Fig trees draw down the heart to earth and keep it there. I have heard, indeed, says the worldly mind, of a beautiful country where the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father,

and I have listened to the pilgrims on the road to it singing—

“ There is a land of pure delight,
Where saints immortal reign ;
Infinite day excludes the night,
And pleasures banish pain.”

But as long as I have my fig-tree I am content with earth, and no inclination to soar away to higher and purer regions. Then comes the *barking of the fig-tree*, and along with it a total change of sentiment, for then the confession is, “ I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are not worthy to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” This is the way in which God teaches heavenly-mindedness to His children. Who does not know how, in proportion, as tie after tie has been broken, as branch after branch has been cut off, the soul of the Christian will often soar heavenward as though on new wings ; his attachments proving themselves the only encumbrances, so that the place where he was stripped of them becomes the place where he mounts nearest to the throne of the Eternal.

When God barks our fig-tree, it is to *encourage sympathy*. What a beautiful trait

is compassion in the character of the Christian! How much of the loveliness of Jesus would disappear were the *tenderness* to be drawn from it! How Jesus moulds us into the pattern of His own tenderness by *barking our fig-tree*, for then we learn to "weep with those who weep," to be "a brother born for adversity," and delicately to handle the wounds of others, having felt the same ourselves. Who was the most tender-hearted member of the Christian Church? Was it not Paul? Where did he learn his sympathy? Was it not from his *own* sufferings? Nay, where did Jesus learn to sympathise with His people? Was it in the heights of glory? Rather when He was led as a lamb to the slaughter; when in the darkness of the ninth hour He said, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me." The barking of *our fig-tree* gives us a tender sympathy with fellow-sufferers which mere knowledge can never give. And, oh, how differently sympathy is felt when it rises out of *felt experience* from the mere sympathy of kind fellow-feeling.

Christian reader, the gospel affords the richest consolations when the fig-tree has been barked. It tells us that it is barked

through the agency of the Divine providence. "HE hath barked my fig-tree." Does He this *wantonly*? The great are sometimes wanton, but wantonness can exist only where there is wickedness, and He who is said to bark the fig-tree is Holy, Holy, Holy. *Carefulness* in the treatment of all things is one of the characteristics of the Divine conduct. Does God do this *cruelly*? Impossible, because GOD IS LOVE. Can a mother find pleasure in the sufferings of her first-born?—will she break the toys of her babe to see him weep, and put wormwood into the food of her child to see him loathe it, and rob the youth of all his pleasures purely to vex him? This is possible, but it is impossible that our God,—for the mere sake of afflicting us, or for any pleasure which He could have in our pain,—should bark our fig-tree. Can God do this *ignorantly*? He that formed the eye, shall not He see? and He that teacheth man knowledge, doth not He know? He sees our fig-tree even when it is a sunny thought, and a pleasant imagination, and a golden hope. And if He strip it, it is not as when an animal is slain by a random shot, or by a stray arrow, but as when a piece of cunning

work is taken to pieces by a skilful workman. God's eye is fully upon the object when He barks the fig-tree. And can God do this *unwisely*? Nay, He has an end and a *right* and a *good* end, and the very *manner* of his doing it is *perfect*. This barking of the fig-tree is part of His plan, and harmonises with all His working from the beginning and for ever. Sometimes we can *see* the end of the Lord, and sometimes we can see it within ourselves. The owner of the fig-tree has made too much of it, and esteemed it too highly, felt too dependent upon it, rejoiced in it too fully, given his heart too much to it, and has suffered it to *screen* God and heaven from his view. He has looked too much at the *traced shadow* of the fig-tree upon the earth, and too little through the fig-tree to the blue heavens and to the sun beyond. He has sat under its shadow when he should have been up and busy with work beyond it. He has confined himself to the fruit of this tree when other provision has been made for his enjoyment and sustenance. He has felt this tree to be his all, and has connected it with all, and to correct this evil, God *has barked the fig-tree*.

If the end of the Lord be not *correction*, it may be *prevention*. The tree may be barked *lest* it *should* screen God and heaven from our sight, lest we should try to rest under its shadow, lest we should try to live by it alone, or as preparation for some blest estate—for the enjoyment of which this barking our fig-tree is the necessary training.

Reader, learn to see a Father's hand, yea, a Father's heart in every affliction. It is not a vindictive enemy that has chastened you, but a loving friend,—not an unfeeling stranger, but a tender Father. HE with a gentle, tender hand, hath barked your fig-tree. No enemy has done it. *It is no accident*. God has done it. God has barked my fig-tree, and GOD IS LOVE.

Then, never forget that there is reserved for you a glorious tree that never fades—the tree of life. “And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river *was* there the tree of life, which bare twelve *manner* of fruits *and* yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the

34 *THE BARKED FIG-TREE.*

nations." Therefore, account nothing safe until you reach that world in which no tree of pleasure dies, where every tree is a tree of rich and boundless LIFE. While here learn to say, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee." And may you learn to sing in summer-time—

“My God, my life, my love,
To Thee, to Thee I call ;
I cannot live if Thou remove,
For Thou art all in all.”

And in winter—

“Our God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home.
Under the shadow of Thy throne,
Thy saints have dwelt secure,
Sufficient is Thine arm alone,
And our defence is sure.”

Divine Care.

MATT. x. 29-31.

“Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, *ye are of more value than many sparrows.*”

1 COR. vii. 32.

“I would have you *without carefulness.*”

MATT. vi. 34.

“Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. *Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*”

NAH. i. 7.

“The Lord is *good*, a stronghold *in* the day of all trouble: and he *knoweth* them that trust in him.”

PS. ciii. 13, 14.

“Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.”

HEB. xiii. 8.

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.”

“ Yes ! for me, for me He careth,
With a brother’s tender care ;
Yes ! with me, with me He shareth
Every burden, every fear.

“ Yes ! o’er me, o’er me He watcheth,
Ceaseless watcheth, night and day ;
Yes ! even me, even me He snatcheth
From the perils of the way.

“ Yes ! for me He standeth pleading,
At the mercy-seat above ;
Ever for me interceding,
Constant in untiring love.

“ Yes ! in me, in me He dwelleth,—
I in Him, and He in me !
And my empty soul He filleth,
Here and through eternity.

“ Thus I wait for His returning,
Singing all the way to heaven ;
Such the joyful song of morning,
Such the tranquil song of even.”

—BONAR.

1 PET. i. 7.

“He careth for you.”



THE Christian's life is very much made up of cares and comforts. Cares spring from earth ; comfort comes from heaven. Cares prove him a sinner ; holy comforts prove him a believer. Cares flow in from a variety of quarters ; true comfort from only one. Cares come naturally ; but comforts supernaturally. We shall be sure to have cares ; but shall we have comfort ? This depends on God's grace, which gives it,—and our faith, which receives it. Cares must be cast on our God, or they will prove a burden too heavy for us ; they will depress, bewilder, and make us wretched. But here is our comfort—we have always ONE to care for us, and the very *One* which of all others we would wish to do so. “The Lord careth for you.”

For whom ? For you, who are begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of

Jesus Christ from the dead,—who are born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever. For *you* who are strangers and pilgrims on the earth, as all your fathers were. For *you* who are placed in humble circumstances, being numbered with the poor of this world. For *you* who are compassed about with so many cares, and who enjoy so few comforts,—who are surprised at the fiery trials which try you, as though some strange thing had happened unto you. For *you* who are worried and harassed by Satan, who, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour. For *you* who are persecuted by the world, and hated by all men for your Saviour's sake. For *you* to whom Christ is precious, as He is to every one who believes in Him. God's care extends to *every* Christian—the young and the aged, the weak and the strong, the poor and the wealthy, the doubting and the confident. Believer, *He* cares for thee.

Who is it that cares for us? It is the Lord, the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy,—who is so great that we have no adequate conception

of His greatness, so good that it is impossible fully to set forth His goodness, and so glorious that no sinner can see His face and live. It is He who created all things with His word, who governs all by His wisdom, and upholds all by His power. His resources are infinite, His compassion exquisite, and His patience suprisingly great. He enters into all the circumstances of His people, is ever present with them, and rejoices over them to do them good. The angels obey Him, the seraphim adore Him, and all creation glorifies Him. But though He is so exalted, so happy, and so unspeakably great, He careth for you. For *you*, mean as you are ; for *you*, sinful as you are ; for *you*, depressed and discouraged as you are. *He careth for you.* He cares for you individually, and according to the circumstances in which you are placed.

What does He do? He careth for you ; He thinks of you ; He watches over you ; He sympathises with you ; He feels the deepest interest in you ; He ever seeks your welfare ; He infallibly secures your good. Your misery touches His heart, your wants lie open to His view, and your cries enter

into His ears. He cares for you more than for the proudest monarch on his throne, or the mightiest production of his power. He cares for you, and His care is *constant*; it is not fitful or occasional, but ever the same. He cares for you, and His care is *paternal*; it is the care of a father for his child,—the child whom he tenderly loves, and for whose welfare he feels the deepest concern. He cares for you, and His care is *perpetual*; He will never care for you less than He does at present. When age weakens you, when wants pinches you, when death appears just before you, He will care for you as much as He did in youth, or as He does at this moment. He cares for you, and His care is *beneficial*; it prevents innumerable evils, and secures the greatest possible amount of good. It is more advantageous than the care of the kindest father, though that father were monarch of the mightiest empire, and possessed unbounded wealth. The care of God is of more value than the care of all His creatures combined. He careth for you, but His care is *mysteriously exercised*; it benefits us certainly, but secretly. It conceals itself behind the blessings it brings, and the evils it pre-

vents. He careth for you, and His care is *special*; it is not the care which He has for the beasts which perish, or the sinners who die under His frown. It is care which extends to the very hairs of your heads, which, are all numbered; and to all the events and occurrences of life, however minute or commonplace.

Beloved, here is our comfort. We may lose the care of an earthly parent by death, but the Lord ever liveth; and while He lives, He cares for us. We may lose the care of a kind earthly friend through the malice of a foe and misrepresentations; but the Lord ever loves us, thoroughly knows us, and never ceases to care for us. Here is the ground of our confidence for the future. We cannot trust in a friend, or put confidence in a guide; we know not *where* we shall be, nor *what* we shall be, for we know not what a day may bring forth; but this we know, that God will care for us, and, caring for us, will fulfil His promise to us, and make all His goodness pass before us. If God cares for us, then let us cast all our cares upon Him; let us live in daily fellowship with Him; let us seek all our supplies from Him. If God

cares for us, let us not dishonour Him by nursing our doubts, or encouraging our fears, but let us trust in Him at all times, for His love is true, His love is constant, and His knowledge is perfect. Let us "be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer, and supplication, with thanksgiving, let our requests be made known unto God ; and the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Let us attend to our Saviour's loving admonition, "Take therefore no thought for the morrow : for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." We shall never be without a friend, however trying our circumstances may be,—or without a guide, however perplexing or difficult our path. The care of God is more than the care of all the angelic hosts ; and if the care of God is not sufficient to preserve, supply, and satisfy us, then nothing is.

The Lord help me to believe this precious truth, to realise it daily, and to pass through the present world under the impression, "I am the object of God's tender, paternal, and ceaseless care."

"To whom should I fly for relief,
 But Him that hath loved me so well ;
 And still when I sink into grief,
 Doth all my infirmities feel ?
 Oh, Lover of sinners, on Thee
 My burden of trouble I cast,
 Whose care and compassion for me
Forever and ever shall last."

-
- " TO-MORROW—'tis an idle sound,
 Tell me of no such dreary thing—
 A new land whither I am bound,
 After strange wandering.
- " What care I if bright blossoms there
 Unfold, and sunny be the field ;
 If laded boughs in summer air
 Their pulpy fruitage yield ;—
- " While deck to-day my present bower,
 Upon my own loved mountain-shade,
 The azure periwinkle flower,
 And violet deep-eyed ?
- " Tell me not of to-morrow,—calm
 In His great hand I would abide ;
 Who fills my present hour with balm,
 And trust whate'er betide."

ALFORD.

JUDGES xiv. 14.

“Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong
came forth sweetness.”

“Well ever near to grief,
And joy shall ever flow ;
Wouldst thou from pain have sure relief,
To pain then ever go.

“Wouldst thou for ever part
With the burden of thy care ;
Then do thou make thy heart
A heavier burden bear.

“Wouldst thou that light should burst
Through the shadows that round thee fall :
Let thy journey be at first
Through the gloomiest shade of all.

“Whatever ill be thine
From which thou wouldst be free,
Its cure sufficient, for divine,
Is *thy Lord's sore agony.*

“Go, make that grief thine own ;
Then grief and tears shall swell,
Yet gazing on this thorny crown,
All is and shall be well.”

W. M.

Submission.

LUKE xxii. 42.

“Not *my* will, but THINE, be done.”

JOHN v. 30.

“I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.”

HEB. xii. 6, 7.

“Whom the Lord *loveth* he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure *chastening*, God dealeth with you as with SONS ; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not ?”

JOB i. 21.

“The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord.”

“ Whate'er my God ordains is right !
His will is ever just ;
Howe'er He orders now my cause,
I will be still and trust.
He is my God !
Though dark my road,
He holds me that I shall not fall,
Wherefore to Him I leave it all.

“ Whate'er my God ordains is right !
He never will deceive ;
He leads me by the proper path,
And so to Him I cleave,
And take content
What He hath sent.
His hand can turn my griefs away,
And patiently I wait His day.

“ Whate'er my God ordains is right !
My Light, my Life, is He,
Who cannot will me aught but good
I trust Him utterly.
For well I know,
In joy or woe,
We soon shall see, as sunlight clear,
How faithful was our Guardian here.

“ Whate'er my God ordains is right !
Here will I take my stand
Though sorrow, need, or death make ear
For me a desert land ;
My Father's care
Is round me there.
He holds me that I shall not fall,
And so to Him I leave it all.”

—From LYRA GERMANICA.

MATT. VI. 10.

“Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.”



HAVE read of a child, whose parent was teaching him the Lord's Prayer, who, when he came to this particular petition, and was instructed to say to God, “Thy will be done,” refused so to repeat it, but insisted on saying, “*My* will be done.” That might have been in childish ignorance; if not, that was a true child of fallen Adam.

There is a dispute as old as Adam, whether God or man shall have his own will. This petition, rightly used, settles the point every day, in the right and best way. No one can pray sincerely to God, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” without yielding the point in question, and saying, “Lord, not *my* will, but THINE be done.”

What is the petition, or the thing prayed for, when we say in a right way, “Thy will be done?” There is the will of God, which

to us is *secret and unknown*. He "ordereth all things," we are told, "after the counsel of his own will." "His footsteps are not known." This secret will of God is not the subject proposed for our prayers; it is not made known to us as such; and if we attempted to pry into it, we should find ourselves lost and bewildered. We must rather say with St Paul, respecting that will of God—"Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out."

But we have much to do with God's *providential* will respecting us. This varies with us individually; there are diversities in God's providential dealings quite as great as the diversities in human countenances. Probably, there are no two individuals on earth whose circumstances in providence correspond in all particulars of their past and present history. What varieties have befallen us as to birth, education, temporal events, health, sickness, in things over which personally we had no control. Regarding the whole of God's providential will toward us, the spirit of the petition taught us

by our Lord directs us not only *not to murmur*, but to acquiesce with cheerfulness, to submit with patience, to adore with gratitude, yea, and to seek to turn the opportunities presented by the events in providence to the glory of God. When God is pleased once to make plain His providential will, then to object or to murmur would be to rebel against Him. When Aaron lost both his sons in one day, we read that "Aaron held his peace." There was silent submission, which yet had a meaning; and that meaning was, "*Thy will be done.*" When Eli heard from Samuel the judgments which God was about to bring on his guilty sons, "It is the Lord," said the old man, "let Him do what seemeth Him good;" in other words, "*Thy will be done.*" When Job lost not only his cattle and his servants, but also his children, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord," was the form in which the bereaved patriarch expressed "Thy will be done."

This, therefore, must be our spirit, in regard to troubles, afflictions, and adversities, which God in His providence may be pleased to send us at any time. If we had our own

natural will, we should choose no such things. If we had our own way, we should have, I suppose, a life without a trouble—all prosperity—always health—riches, I suppose, in abundance ; we should never lose a friend by death, and never shed one tear of sorrow ; life would be to us like one bright holiday, with our path strewn with roses—but they must be roses without thorns ; our way echoing music—but it must be music without one jarring note. We should be surrounded, I suppose, with the gay and the smiling ; with not one misery, lest it should interrupt our gladness and joy.

But what a contrast is God's providential will towards us, by which man finds himself liable from infancy, to sickness, accident disease, and death ; often called to struggle with poverty ; with bereavement ever and anon contracting the social circle ; frequently familiar with tears ; finding many a day of life darkened with storms ; his path long and stormy—a rough road ; often obliged to hang his harp upon the willows, as he sits down to weep over his captivity.

When God's providential will in such ways crosses our natural will, what are we to do ?

We are to say, "*Thy will be done!*" and to acquiesce with cheerfulness. Not with stoical apathy; we may feel as men, while we submit as Christians. How beautifully is this shewn in the conduct of our Lord! He felt as the Son of man: "Father, if it be Thy will, take this cup from Me." He submitted as the Son of God, the exemplar of a Christian! "Nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done."

Christian believer, be encouraged! The will of God toward thee is altogether full of love. "It is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of His little ones should perish." Ask for grace to know and do His will; though on earth, yet should your will have more and more of the temper of heaven. Enter more frequently into the communion of saints; endeavour all you can, by the help of God, to make earth resemble heaven, by doing the will of God *here* as it is done *there*.

And then—oh, to be there! We are allowed the aspiration and the hope—"O that I had wings like a dove! Then would I fly away and be at rest." Well, wait your time; your *turn* will soon come; "every one in

his own order,"—some sooner, others a little later ; almost every week we mourn the loss of some who used to do God's will faithfully and consistently, in their sphere, who greatly glorified His name on earth, and who now, "through faith and patience, inherit the promises ;" and in due time—and the time will be but short—all who love and serve God shall meet there, and be with "the spirits of just men made perfect," and with "an innumerable company of angels ;" and what is better than all, "so shall ye ever be with the Lord," there to do His will perfectly, "*as it is done in heaven !*"

"O Lord, create in us clean hearts. Incline them to Thy law. Renew our nature in Thy holy likeness. May it be our *delight* to do THY will, O God. May we no longer work the will of the flesh. Over all our pains, and all our losses, may we meekly, and with no feigned lips, say, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord.' "

- “ My God, my Father, while I stray
Far from my home, on life's rough way,
Oh teach me from my heart to say,
‘ Thy will be done.’ ”
- “ Though dark my path, and poor my lot,
Let me be still, and murmur not ;
Or breathe the prayer divinely taught,
‘ Thy will be done.’ ”
- “ If Thou shouldst call me to resign
What most I prize—it ne'er was mine—
I only yield Thee what was Thine :
‘ Thy will be done.’ ”
- “ Should pining sickness waste away
My life in premature decay,
My Father, still I 'll strive to say,
‘ Thy will be done.’ ”
- “ If but my fainting heart be blest
With Thy sweet Spirit for its guest,
My God, to Thee I leave the rest—
‘ Thy will be done.’ ”
- “ Renew my will from day to day,
Blend it with Thine, and take away
All that now makes it hard to say,
‘ Thy will be done.’ ”
- “ Then, when on earth I breathe no more
The prayer oft mix'd with tears before,
I'll sing upon a happier shore,
‘ Thy will be done.’ ”

SUBMISSION.

“ ‘ Father, Thy will, not mine, be done !’

So pray'd on earth thy suffering Son,

So in His name I pray.

My spirit fails, the flesh is weak,

Thy help in agony I seek,

Oh take Thy cup away !

“ If such be not Thy sovereign will,

The wiser purpose then fulfil ;

My wishes I resign.

Into Thine hands my soul commend,

On Thee for life or death depend—

Thy will be done, not mine.”

MONTGOMERY.

Perseverance.

PHIL. iii. 12.

“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.”

2 PET. i. 5, 10.

“And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure.”

EPH. vi. 18.

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.”

ECCLES. ix. 10.

“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.”

PROV. iv. 18.

“The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”

- "Courage, brother, do not stumble,
 Though thy path be dark as night ;
 There's a star to guide the humble ;
 'Trust in God, and do the right.'
- "Let the road be rough and dreary,
 And its end far out of sight,
 Foot it bravely, strong or weary,
 'Trust in God, and do the right.'
- "Perish 'policy' and cunning !
 Perish all that fears the light !
 Whether losing, whether winning.
 'Trust in God, and do the right.'
- "Trust no party, sect, or fashion ;
 Trust no 'leaders' in the fight ;
 But in every word and action,
 'Trust in God, and do the right.'
- "Trust no lovely forms of passion ;
 Friends may look like angels bright,
 Trust no custom, 'school,' or fashion,
 'Trust in God, and do the right.'
- "Simple rule, and safest guiding,
 Inward peace, and inward might,
 Star upon our path abiding,
 'Trust in God, and do the right.'
- "Some will hate thee, some will love thee,
 Some will flatter, some will slight ;
 Cease from man, and look above thee,
 'Trust in God, and do the right.'"
 —NORMAN MACLEOD.

ISA. xl. 31.

“They shall run and not be weary.”



COURAGE! my fellow-travellers, Did I not tell you that the way of the Lord was strength to the upright? and now you find it so. The further you advance the better it is; the difficulties vanish, or you no longer mind them. You only prayed for strength to *walk*, and here are promises that you shall *run* without tiring.

In our way through the wilderness we are often called to endure *trials* that require the utmost exertion,—and all little enough. We feel ourselves feeble and faint; and, with a peevishness bordering upon despair, cry, “Who is sufficient for these things?” Sometimes the Lord calls us to *services* which we think ourselves very unfit for; and we make as many objections as Moses did to his undertaking the deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt; but there is no evading them; qualified or unqualified, un-

dertake them we must, and if we have faith enough to follow the Lord fully, we never have cause to complain. Sometimes the Lord calls us to *sufferings*, which we think we did not deserve ; or, at least, which we did not need. Deep calleth unto deep, and all His waves and His billows seem ready to go over us ; he writes “vanity” or “death” upon our possessions and enjoyments ; some are taken away, others are threatened, and all are embittered. In these cases if we know the grace of God in truth, we would fain prove ourselves good soldiers of Jesus Christ, by enduring hardness, by our steadiness and stability in the way of God. We wish to imitate our Divine Master in activity and submission ; but, a!as ! are sadly defective in both ; we can neither *do* nor *bear* as we ought ; every little difficulty stops us, and every little trouble overwhelms us. But, again I say, courage, my fellow-travellers ; God hath given us many exceeding great and precious promises, and this is one of them, “They shall run and not be weary.”

To *run*, in a spiritual or religious acceptance, is to engage with great liveliness and zeal in the duties which God hath appointed,

and to persist in them with all our powers. And those who thus run under the influences of Divine grace shall not grow weary ; the way shall not prove tedious and irksome to them. Bodily labour soon exhausts the spirits, and nature cannot bear up long when it is in its greatest vigour without fresh and frequent recruitings. “ Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall : but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. . . . They shall run, and *not be weary* ; and they shall walk, and not faint.”

A natural weariness they may be subject to through the indisposition and decay of this vile body ; and this may sometimes flatten their taste,—I mean as to the present lively feeling of joy and comfort ; but the principle of delighting in God doth not expire. We read of Jesus himself, that He was weary with His journey, and sat down by Jacob’s well, and wanted natural refreshment ; but this did not lessen His attention to the work which His Father had given Him to do, nor abate His delight in it. Far otherwise. At that time He had a most heavenly repast in converting a sinful woman. Some

drops of this oil of gladness there are in the hearts of diligent, fruitful Christians, by which they are enabled to go on from one service to another with ease and rapidity, and though the flesh sometimes flags and tires, the willingness of the spirit still continues, and their love to Christ, and their eagerness to serve Him, are as strong as ever.

Those who run as they ought have *the power and promise of God to depend upon*. And what God hath once engaged to perform is absolutely and eternally sure ; for He can never depart from His word, and can never be at a loss for means to fulfil it. Now, the Lord God, unchangeable and omnipotent, hath promised that they shall not be weary : He hath undertaken to supply them with strength, as *much* and as *often* as they can have occasion for. What a precious promise is that : “ Fear thou not, for I am with thee ; be not dismayed for I am thy God ; I will strengthen thee ; yea, I will help thee ; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.”

I need not trouble myself to look for any other reason ; God, who cannot lie, hath

promised that you shall not be weary—and that is enough. However, *there is a boundless excellency in religion calculated to afford continual refreshment.* It is justly remarked of all the delights of sense, that they perish in the using ; they are but “as the crackling thorns under a pot.” “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world ; and the world passeth away, and the lust thereof.” But spiritual attainments are more permanent. They are “a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.” There are secret conveyances which continually feed it, so that it can never be drawn dry ; the satisfactions to be met with in the service of God are maintained by a Divine Hand, and therefore can never fail. The toils and labours of religion have one advantage above all other pursuits,—there is no climbing to the top ; there is no sounding the bottom ; there is no finding out the breadth or length of its excellency and sweetness. The more I am with God in His ordinances, the more I see that I do not know Him, nor love Him, nor serve Him, nor enjoy Him, so well as I ought and might.

There is more beyond that I can yet attain to ;
“for now we see through a glass darkly ; but
then, face to face ; now I know in part ; but
then, shall I know even as also I am known.”

And this suggests another reason why we should not be weary—viz., *because the faster we run the nearer we approach to heaven.* Grace is glory begun—therefore, improvement in grace is called being “changed from glory to glory.” We all know that they who are running in a race feel new vigour when they come in sight of the goal ; and especially the first of the competitors. With what a spring doth he advance in his last steps to lay hold on the prize ! It is the same in the Christian race ; the near approach of salvation drives off lazy slumbers, and sets all the powers of the soul in animated motion. Travellers tell us of some countries, which are so full of aromatic plants and flowers, that they perceive the fragrance at some distance, and are highly refreshed by the pleasing gales. Do you not think it is the same with the Christian traveller, as he bears up towards the heavenly country, of which “the land flowing with milk and honey” was a figure ? Do you not

think that the nearer we draw to heaven, the clearer anticipation we shall have of the joys above? I appeal to my aged and venerable readers, who have been long in the wilderness, and are now almost upon the banks of Jordan, whether the prospects from Pisgah be not reviving; whether you do not feel your spirits invigorated with the breezes from Canaan. Oh! if dying saints could tell us what *they* feel we should have proofs enough. Their countenances tell us, that, while they are walking through the valley of the shadow of death, they are rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

O Christians! with such prospects before us, is it not strange that we run no faster now,—that, when we are professedly aiming at heaven, and heaven, with respect to some, can be at no great distance, it should be possible for the comparatively trifling concerns of this world to engage our attention; that we do not spurn it from us with indignation; and, like the pilgrim, who ran through Vanity Fair, shutting his eyes, and stopping his ears,—I say, that we do not make all the haste we can to get through the wilderness, and be out of the reach of its temptations.

One would wonder that we can think of anything but heaven,—the place, the company, the work, the joys, the glory, all so animating! At present you hardly know how to believe the promise, you are so often and so soon tired. You can scarcely be engaged an hour before your jaded faculties complain, and oblige you to break off, so that you can hardly comprehend, at least you never attain to, the full meaning of this precious promise. But in heaven it shall be most gloriously fulfilled, there you shall rest not, day nor night, from the most ardent and elevated devotion; and yet, after millions of years, you shall be as fresh and lively as the first moment you began. Then you will be convinced that it *is* possible to run and not be weary, and will adore the grace that made you an example of it.

“O Father, may it please Thee to guide and shield Thy servant by Thy providence. Strengthen me in the hour and under the power of temptation. Succour and sustain me by Thy might in every conflict. Help me to *run* and not be weary—to fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life.”

- “ Go, labour on ; spend, and be spent,—
Thy joy to do the Father's will :
It is the way the Master went,
Should not the servant tread it still ?
- “ Go, labour on ; 'tis not for nought ;
Thy earthly loss is heavenly gain ;
Men heed Thee, love Thee, praise Thee not ;
The Master praises ;—what are men ?
- “ Go, labour on ; your hands are weak,
Your knees are faint, your soul cast down ;
Yet falter not ; the prize you seek
Is near,—a kingdom and a crown.
- “ Go, labour on, while it is day,
The world's dark night is hastening on ;
Speed, speed thy work, cast sloth away,
It is not thus that souls are won.
- “ Men die in darkness at your side,
Without a hope to cheer the tomb ;
Take up the torch and wave it wide,
The torch that lights time's thickest gloom.
- “ Toil on, faint not, keep watch and pray ;
Be wise, the erring soul to win ;
Go forth into the world's highway,
Compel the wanderer to come in.
- “ Toil on, and in thy toil rejoice ;
For toil comes rest, for exile home ;
Soon shalt thou hear the Bridegroom's voice,
The midnight cry, ‘ Behold, I come.’ ”

—BONAR.

“Be not weary,” *toiling* Christian,
 Good the Master thou dost serve ;
 Let no disappointment move thee,
 From thy service never swerve ;
 Sow in hope, nor cease thy sowing ;
 Lack not patience, faith, or prayer ;
 Seed-time passeth,—harvest hasteneth,
 Precious sheaves thou then shalt bear.

“Be not weary,” *suffering* Christian,
 Scourged is each adopted child,
 Else would grow, in sad profusion,
 Nature’s fruit, perverse and wild ;
 Chastening’s needful for the spirit,
 Though ’tis painful for the flesh,
 God designs a blessing for thee ;—
 Let this thought thy soul refresh.

“Be not weary,” *tempted* Christian,
 Sin can only lure on earth ;
 Faith is tried by sore temptation ;
 ’Tis the furnace proves its worth ;
 Bounds are set unto the tempter,
 Which beyond he cannot go ;
 Battle on, on God relying,
 Faith will overcome the foe.

“Be not weary,” *weeping* Christian,
 Tears endure but for the night,
 Joy, deep joy thy spirit greeting,
 Will return with morning’s light ;
 Every tear thou shedd’st is number’d
 In the register above ;
Heaven is tearless, sweet the prospect,—
Sighless, tearless land of love.”

A. M.

Christ in the Storm.

DEUT. xxxiii. 25-27.

“Thy shoes *shall be* iron and brass ; and as thy days, *so shall* thy strength be. *There is* none like unto the God of Jeshurun, *who* rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God *is thy* refuge, and underneath *are* the everlasting arms.”

Ps. xci. 1, 2, 5.

“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord he is my refuge and my fortress : my God ; in him will I trust. . . . Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day.”

PROV. iii. 24.

“When thou liest down thou shalt not be afraid.”

ISA. xii. 2.

“Behold God is my salvation ; I will trust, and not be afraid : for the Lord JEHOVAH *is* my strength and *my* song : he also has become my salvation.”

Ps. lvi. 11.

“In God have I put my trust : I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.”

- “ When waves of sorrow round me swell,
My soul is not dismay'd ;
I hear a voice I know full well—
‘Tis I, be not afraid.’
- “ When black the threatening clouds appear,
And storms my path invade ;
That voice shall tranquillise each fear—
‘Tis I, be not afraid.’
- “ There is a gulf that must be cross'd,
Saviour ! be near to aid ;
Whisper, when my frail bark is toss'd—
‘Tis I, be not afraid.’
- “ There is a dark and fearful vale,
Death hides within its shade ;
Oh, say when flesh and heart shall fail—
‘Tis I, be not afraid.’”

MARK vi. 50.

“ Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid.”



BLESSED Jesus, if Thou art with us, what shall we fear? All we dread is Thy removal. Only assure us of Thy presence, and let the rains descend, and the waves beat vehemently, none of these things shall move us.

There is something in the situation of the disciples on that dismal night, so correspondent with the experience of most Christians; and there is something so interesting and engaging in their certain, though long delayed deliverance, that a few moments spent in particular consideration of them, may, I hope, be useful.

“ And he straightway constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side, unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people.” We may easily imagine how unwilling His disciples were to leave Him, and might have expected to find them

expressing their reluctance. But we hear no such language. Like the good Centurion, He said to them, Go, and they go : He sent them from Him, but it was only to make His presence more desirable and welcome. God's commands may sometimes seem grievous, and such a path may be marked out for us, as in our apprehensions threatens greatly to interrupt our communications with Him. But if we have patience to wait and see His design, we shall find that in reality His commandments are *merciful* and *gracious*, and that He has taken the *best* means for the accomplishment of our wishes, and the comfort and salvation of our souls.

“And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray.” How strangely did the blessed Jesus condescend to human infirmities ! He hungered and thirsted, He wept and prayed. That we, sinful and necessitous creatures, who abound with wants and miseries, should retire to pray is no wonder. You find, Christian, that you cannot live without prayer, or enjoy yourself in a crowd. You cannot go on from day to day, in a constant hurry of business and pleasure, without retiring to com-

mune with your God. That helpless, dependent, sinful creatures, should need to pray often and long, is not at all strange. But what, blessed Jesus, should induce Thee so often to attend to this duty? Alas! in this, as well as in every other instance, we see that Thy thoughts are not as ours. Intercession for others, which makes so small a part of our prayers, was the chief subject of Thine. The weather-beaten disciples we may be certain were not forgotten. O ye afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted, *distant and unregarded* as you may apprehend yourself to be, He is nigh them who are of a broken heart. While you are struggling with troubles, the most formidable and threatening, and all His waves and billows are passing over you, remember that Jesus is in the mountain praying for you.

“And when the evening was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone upon the land; and he seeth them toiling in rowing, for the wind was contrary.” Everything seemed to conspire to heighten their misery and aggravate their distress. The night was dark; the winds were high and contrary; the sea was boisterous; and

what was worst of all, their Master was absent. Had He been with them, however the elements had raged, they might have thought themselves safe. But the providence of God many times calls His servants, *His most beloved disciples*, to walk in darkness, where they can see no light ; and cuts them off from all prospects and possibilities of comfort from any other hand but His own, to teach them to wait upon Him, and to convince them that from Him alone come their help and salvation. He could easily prevent our sufferings, but He wisely permits them, that He may glorify His mercy in our deliverance, and confirm our faith by the removal of our distress. But though the wind was against them, we find not that they *returned*. Their Master had ordered them to go to the other side, and therefore, in spite of wind and weather, they press forward. Mark this, O my soul. He sent out His servants to sea, though He foresaw the storm, and perhaps *purposely* too, that they might be tossed by the tempest. Why art thou, therefore, cast down, why art thou disquieted within me ? Depend upon His grace, follow His directions, and the end will fully equal thy wishes.

“And about the fourth watch of the night, he cometh walking to them on the sea.” All that long and tempestuous night must the disciples wear out in terror and distress. In the evening there was no appearance of Jesus. But when they had been all night long tossed at the mercy of the waves, and quite spent with toils and fears, in the fourth watch, which was near the morning, Jesus comes to them. This was done that He might exercise their faith and patience, and that their devotion may be more animated, and deliverance more welcome, in consequence of the trying delay. We own, O Lord, that we are often unable to explain the reasons of Thy conduct. What Thou dost, we know not now, but we depend on Thy promise, and we rejoice in the thought that we shall know it hereafter. Christian friend, like these poor disciples, you may be now in the midst of a sea of trouble. The winds roar ; the billows glance, and foam, and howl ; the night is very dark ; and your Saviour’s absence heightens your distress. But the time to favour you is now fully come. Perhaps it is now midnight with you ; but if you

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hold out till the fourth watch, He will certainly appear for your deliverance.

He came to them walking on the sea. He, who among the mountains was a man, reassumed the imperial royalties of the Godhead. The waves play round the feet of their Master. The tempest that rocks their vessel will not ruffle His robe or lift His hair. "*And he would have passed them by.*" Surely His absence could not be more grievous than this. But we must not always determine the Lord's designs from appearances. He sometimes appears to turn from us when He is most attentive to our distresses. If He pass us by, or rather seem as if He would, when we are struggling in the storm, we know that it is not for want of *kindness* or *affection*. He will not, He cannot neglect us. Oh, let us therefore never distrust Him.

"But when they saw him walking on the sea, they supposed that it had been a spirit, and cried out, for they all saw him, and were afraid." What object would have been so pleasant to the disciples as their Master? and yet His presence greatly alarmed them. Has not our ignorance, too, of Jesus, and the

way that He takes, led us often to suspect, yea, to run away from our safety, to be afraid of our means of comfort, and to mistake our compassionate and heavenly Friend ?

“And immediately he talked with them.” This was indeed very seasonable ; for, in consequence of their alarm from the apprehension of seeing an apparition, and from the increasing violence of the tempest, they were almost overwhelmed. Till they were thus afraid, He would not speak, but *then* He could be no longer silent. If His presence was frightful, His words were comfortable. “BE OF GOOD CHEER. *It is I, be not afraid.*” He was present before, but they mistook Him, and feared ; for it is His word only that can make His presence known. “Be of good cheer.” It is remarkable how frequently exhortations of this kind are used by Christ and His apostles. He is pleased to see His servants cheerful ; therefore He has said, “Be careful for nothing.” “Cast all your care upon Him, for He careth for you.” “Cast thy burden upon the Lord.” “Delight thyself in the Lord.” “Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice.” A thousand passages of this kind might be enume-

rated to shew us how abundantly light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. *Be of good cheer* then, thou dejected believer, dry up thy tears, and cast off the gloom of thy countenance, which is so unbecoming thy character, and so displeasing to thy Saviour. For the credit of thy religion, for the honour of thy Master, for the encouragement of thy fellow-disciples, *be cheerful*, and let all the world see that wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness.

"It is I." He does not say who, nor was it necessary. His sheep hear His voice; and we are not of His flock if we know Him not by His voice among a thousand. "It is I, the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth; I, who command the winds and waves, and they obey me; I, your Lord and Saviour, and Friend, whom you lost last night in the mountain, praying for you." What a seasonable and comprehensive word was that, and how did it calm the tumult of their passions! Blessed Jesus, only say, "It is I," and in spite of winds and waves and storms, and men and devils, **WE ARE SAFE.**

"O Thou who dost quiet the storm, and

lay to rest the war of elements, bear me in safety across the dark and troubled sea of life. Ever be present with me in thy watchful love, and in all the might and mercy of thy power. Never leave me ; never forsake me. In darkness be my light ; in sorrow be my joy ; in death be my life. And after death, bring me to that cloudless world, where not a wave of trouble shall ever cross my breast ; where the din of earth shall be hushed into everlasting quiet, and the sighs of time shall give place to the songs of immortality.”

“ Lord ! the waves are breaking o’er me and around ;
Oft of coming tempest I hear the moaning sound ;
Here there is no safety, rocks on either hand,
’Tis a foreign roadstead, a strange and hostile land.
Wherefore should I linger ? others gone before,
Long since safe are landed on a calm and friendly shore :
Now the sailing orders, in mercy, Lord, bestow,
Loose the cable, let me go.”

“ He bids us come ; His voice we know,
And boldly on the waters go,
To Him our Lord and God :
We walk on life’s tempestuous sea,
For He who died to set us free
Hath call’d us by His word.

“ Secure from troubled waves we tread,
Not all the storms around us heed,
While to our Lord we look ;
O’er every fierce temptation bound,
The billows yield a solid ground,
The wave is firm as rock.

“ But if from Him we turn our eye,
And see the raging floods run high,
And feel our fears within ;
Our foes so strong, our flesh so frail,
Reason and unbelief prevail,
And sink us into sin.

“ Lord, we our unbelief confess :
Our little spark of faith increase,
That we may doubt no more ;
But fix on Thee a steady eye,
And on Thine outstretch’d arm rely,
Till all the storm is o’er.”

From SPIRITUAL SONGS.

All-sufficient Grace.

PHIL. iv. 19.

“My God shall supply *all your need* according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

PS. xxiii. 1, 2.

“The Lord is *my* shepherd ; I shall not *want*. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures : he leadeth me beside the still waters.”

ISA. lviii. 11.

“And the Lord shall guide thee continually, *and satisfy thy soul in drought*, and make fat thy bones : and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.”

MATT. vi. 33. 34.

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness : and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow : for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. *Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*”

2 COR. iij. 5.

“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves ; but our sufficiency is of God.”

“ O Lord ! I look to Thee,
To Thee lift up my heart,
In heaven I would Thy glory see,
Now therefore grace impart.

“ *Grace* to prevent my sin,
My passions to subdue,
My heart to change, my soul to win,
My spirit to renew.

“ *Grace* every hour to bend
My stubborn will to Thine,
Till I in mind and heart ascend
To where the angels shine.

“ *Grace* to each stroke to bow,
Gladly each cross to bear;
That suffering with the Saviour now,
I soon His joy may share.

“ *Grace* to be kind to all,
All to forbear in love ;
Gently to deal with those that fall,
Like Him who reigns above.

“ *Grace* onward still to go ;
Forward each day to press,
Till Thou the blood-bought prize bestow,
Christ's crown of righteousness.

“ Lord ! give me this rich grace,
Oh, give Thyself to me !
That I may dwell before Thy face,
And all Thy glory see.”

C. T. ASTLEY.

“And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee : for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”



HERE has been a great deal of curiosity to know what the “thorn in the flesh” was. There is not, I suppose, one ill that has touched humanity which has not been dignified and made to stand in the place of this affliction. The apostle speaks of it as a *definite* affliction. It was not a condition, it was a thing. It had a specific nature. He prayed that it might be removed. This is the most we know about it. It is very evident that whatever the nature of the thorn was, it in some way impaired his ministerial and personal power. It was a hindrance, an obstruction, a limitation. It was a weakness in which Christ’s power was to be made signally illustrious.

The severity of his suffering is indicated

by the figure ; for nothing can be more painful or irritating, in a small way, than the piercing of a thorn, sharp, and harder to be borne than many dull heavy continuous pains. And his repeated solicitations for relief would not have been if the trouble had not been most serious.

The desire to get rid of suffering, and the repeated prayer for release from it, were right enough. They were both natural and proper. Paul carried his trouble, whatever it was, to his God. The reply which he received implies that the trouble was not removed. He does not explicitly say this. It is left to be inferred, "Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me." *That* was the object of its being sent ; to keep down his pride and his vanity. "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee."

It does not state that it was, or that it was not taken away. It is left to be inferred that it remained, for that was the answer to the prayer. It implies the trouble was cured,

but not by extraction. The nerve was killed, although the tooth was not extracted. There are two ways in which troubles are got rid of ; one is by *ejecting* them, throwing them away, so that they cease to be present with us. The other is by *keeping them*, but growing them over with such grace and such sustaining power, that they cease to be an annoyance. It was in this latter way that trouble of Paul was dealt with.

“My grace is sufficient for thee.” That word *sufficient* has great amplitude in it. It is not simply a promise of help, it is a promise that there shall be *enough* help to meet the emergency. The power of God has a clear field ; and if, when His servants are in trouble, His grace shall be adequate to their wants,—shall be sufficient for them,—nothing more can be added or imagined. The bounds of such promises include all possibilities of human experience.

It is eminently proper that Christians should bear their troubles to God. There is a general concurrent conviction in the Church, and throughout the world, of the efficacy of prayer. But there are many persons whose prayers are rather *general*

than *specific*; whose prayers are for the advance of God's kingdom; whose prayers do not go down to deal with the daily cares and troubles of secular life. Everybody believes that he may carry his *religious troubles* to God. All believe that under great and pressing afflictions men may resort to God with them. But in the case of the apostle, we have an instance of a trouble that carried him to God, which was neither one nor the other of these kinds. It is very significant that the figure employed is thorn,—not sword, not spear,—no instrument that indicates great breadth of power, but *thorn*. He was nettled, scratched, pierced. It was a little thing that he was called to endure. It was the annoyance of a pungent thorn, which brought pain, but no peril; which worried him and fretted him; which drew his thoughts away from higher things, and made his life a burden to him. It was a little thing *continued*, so that its *sum total* of affliction was a great deal. That was the thing that *thrice* the apostle went to God with, praying for release from it.

We may, therefore, in prayer, bring to God minor vexations; all the things that

burden and annoy and hinder us in life ; whatever takes away our peace and restrains our joy.

Thus the range of this Christian duty is vastly enlarged. Our life is filled up chiefly with little things. Great occasions come seldom. And if we exclude from prayer little things, we may almost as well exclude life itself ; for all the way through we live by minutes and seconds, every one of which has its own peculiar relation to our pleasure or pain, our joy or sorrow. There is no thing so minute that God does not take cognizance of it, and consider it. Christ is so united to His people, that there is no trial which they bear which He does not bear.

The continuance of pains and troubles with God's people is not an evidence of His displeasure, but oftentimes the contrary. It makes no difference what the trouble is, we have a right to carry it to God, and ask that it may be *removed*, or that we may be *sustained* under it. The compliance on the part of God with either of these conditions is a sufficient answer to our prayer for relief from trouble. Many of our troubles may be removed, and are removed, while many

others remain. Many of our troubles are like snow, which starting snow becomes rain before it meets the ground; while others are like snow, which falls to the ground snow, but which, though it lies there all winter long, is sure to melt when spring comes. And to carry the figure forward, as the snow-drop becomes the rain-drop, and the rain-drop becomes the juice of fruits and flowers, so our troubles, though they fall cold on thy branch, melt and carry sap to the root.

There are many troubles that God brings upon His people, or permits them to bring upon themselves, which He does not care to take away from them, and which it is not best for them to have removed. Continued troubles are not, therefore, evidences of God's displeasure. He distinctly affirms, that unless we have such troubles we cannot be His sons. "Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children"—*as unto children*, "My son," when anybody is in trouble, God says to him by that trouble, My son—"Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him; for whom the

“Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening God dealeth with you as with sons.” This is the word of God. When your trouble is real and painful, and you carry it to God and ask for its removal, if it abides with you, you are apt to think, “It must be that God is punishing me for my sins, and that He is hiding His face from me.” “No,” says the voice of God ; “so far from it, I am dealing with you tenderly, I am your parent, I love you, and the trouble that I permit to remain with you is one of the evidences of the affection I cherish toward you.”

It is every Christian's duty to have a victory either *over* his trials or *in* them. And this last is the better of the two, and far the more glorious ; for it is a higher exhibition of grace to be able to bear trouble than to get rid of it. To be able to endure is more Christian than to have nothing to endure. Who could not be a Christian, if every time anything touched him to hurt him, prayer, like a shield struck right between the weapon and the sensitive skin, so that he could always avoid pain? But if trouble

really wrings the nerve and muscle of a man, and then a heroism is vouchsafed to him, such that he can afford to have it continued, there is awakened in him a manhood transcendently higher than that which would be awakened if the trouble were removed in answer to prayer.

And this is the promise of the Saviour—either that it shall be removed, or that grace shall be given with which to bear it. God says, “My grace is sufficient for you. Take trouble and bear it, and I will sustain you under it.”

God’s sustaining grace produces a sense of our *real weakness*, which is most wholesome. For we tend naturally to arrogance in strength. Prosperity has the effect to puff us up ; and a sense of our weakness is a returning to our reason.

God’s grace also humanises us, and brings us to our kind. In the day of prosperity we are apt to feel quite *independent* of our fellow-men ; but when the day of trouble comes, we find that we stand greatly in need of them. Blessed are those troubles that make us feel, not only our dependence on God, but our relations to our fellow-men.

God's grace teaches us to see how small a part of ourselves we are accustomed to use and to live in, in this world. God's grace, upon our troubles, develops in us a Divine power of faith and hope. We live by faith. We walk not by sight. God by trouble disenchant's the world, so that it ceases to be what we tend to make it. We are wont to feel its fascination in the flow of ordinary affairs. We are liable to be brought into bondage to the customs and usages and influences of society. But trouble takes off the varnish that overlays the raw material of things, and lets us see them just as they are. Blessed are they that know how to find heaven without leaving the earth. Blessed are they, the door of whose closet, when they shut it, shuts out the world.

“Almighty God, guard me against that anxiety about provision for my bodily needs, which is incompatible with child-like trust in Thy paternal care and bounty. Let me not indulge in immoderate concern about the future, but rest for the supply of all things on Thy sufficiency and Thy grace.”

“I am oppress’d ; my gracious God !
I cry beneath Thy chastening rod ;
Lord, undertake for me !

“I am oppress’d ; I look around,
And see Thy judgments’ heavy cloud ;
Oh, undertake for me !

“I am oppress’d ; I walk with those
Who sorrow ’neath a Christian’s woes ;
Then undertake for me !

“I am oppress’d ; I bear within
A heart that’s fill’d with shame and sin,
Yet undertake for me !

“I am oppress’d ; at my right hand
The tempter of my soul doth stand ;
Lord, undertake for me !

“I am oppress’d ; behold my tears,
Receive my prayer, remove my fears ;
Still undertake for me !

“I am oppress’d ; O Saviour, say
That Thou wilt wipe my tears away,
And undertake for me !”

Jesus a Friend.

SOL. SONG vi. 3.

“I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine.”

ISA. xliii. 1.

“But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, *Fear not*; for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name: *thou art mine.*”

1 JOHN i. 3.

“Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

Ps. lxxiii. 25.

“Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.”

1 PET. ii. 7.

“Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious.”

JOHN xv. 4.

“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.”

“ While in the desert lonely I roam,
Fainting and weary, longing for home,
Thou with Thy presence say, ‘ Hope to the end,
I will sustain thee,
I am thy friend.’

“ Closer than brother cleave Thou to me,
Truer than mother deign Thou to be,
Pardon my vileness,—Thy mercy extend ;
Oh, Thou long-sufferer,
Be Thou my friend.

“ When earthly cisterns no water hold,
When friendship withers, love waxes cold,
When o’er reeds broken, mourning I bend,
Whisper my lone heart,
‘ I am thy friend.’

“ And when to Jordan’s wave I draw near,
Hold Thou my hand ; say, ‘ Peace, do not fear,
Floods shall not overwhelm thee, storms shall not rend,
Death shall not harm thee,
I AM THY FRIEND.’ ”

PROV. xviii. 23.

• And there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.”



AND who do you think it is? JESUS! You are right. I was sure you could not hesitate a moment; it is indeed the man Christ Jesus. “There is no other name under heaven given among men,” to which this character so properly belongs. Men of high degree are vanity, and men of low degree are a lie, and men of every degree are broken reeds; there is no dependence upon any of them: they speak fair, and for a little *carry* it fair; but they fail at last; either through fickleness or frailty, from insincerity or incapacity, they fail us when most we need their help. Not so our “elder brother,” our Divine friend; He is Christ Jesus, *the same* yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

Say now, Christian, could I have mentioned one with whom you would rather wish to

spend an hour? To you I know He is precious—at all times precious. Jesus Christ is the most *ancient* friend; a circumstance which should greatly endear Him to us. “Thine own friend, and thy father’s friend, forsake thou not;” intimating that such a person—one who had been a fast friend to our family for a great number of years—is to be highly valued. And herein Christ infinitely excels the oldest friend we have. Hear what He says of Himself, “when he appointed the foundations of the earth, then I was by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men.” Here was friendship, disinterested and unparalleled. Under the Old Testament we see Him frequently appearing as the “Angel of the Lord,” and the “Angel of the Covenant,” with messages of love to His people. But nothing can express it so emphatically as His own word. “In all their afflictions he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.”

If a perfect stranger were to come to us in our distress, and *offer to relieve* us, we should hardly know how to trust him. "How do I know who or what he is? Perhaps he only mocks my woe. If he does as he says, I shall thank him; but I am afraid to believe it till I see it." Now, with respect to Christ, this objection is removed; He is no stranger; He is one that we have been long acquainted with; He hath been a friend to the family as far back as we can remember, and further too. "We have heard with our ears, and our fathers have told us," how kind He was to *them*; and we have had a thousand proofs of His kindness to *us*, and shall we distrust Him now? No. Though my present trial is very heavy, and such as I never experienced before, I can trust Him. "I remember the days of old, the years of the right hand of the Most High," and have not the least doubt that He who hath been my father's friend, and my own friend for so many years, will continue to be a friend to me and mine, as often and as long as we shall need Him.

Jesus Christ is an *affectionate* friend. We often meet with persons who make great pro-

fessions of kindness and respect ; nothing but “my dear friend,” and “my dear friend” at every word ; and “how glad they should be to serve us.” While at the same time we have reason to think they have not merely no real regard, but an actual dislike, and would, *underhand*, rather do us an unkindness. But Jesus is not one of these. Never was guile found in His mouth. Whenever He makes professions of love, His heart goes along with them. Try Him in those things which are the usual expressions of regard between one friend and another, and you will see how in all things Christ has the pre-eminence. For example—hearty friends mutually *sympathise* with one another, and take part in one another’s joys and griefs. Christ does so. “We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.”

“With joy we meditate the grace
Of our High Priest above ;
His heart is made of tenderness,
His bowels melt with love.”

Hearty friends *love one another’s company*—take every opportunity of being together ; and when obliged to separate, contrive to

meet again as soon as possible. Christ does so. He "walks among the golden candlesticks," and "loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." Hearty friends *seek one another's interest*. Do a kindness to one, and the other esteems it as done to himself; do an injury to one, and the other resents it as done to himself. Christ felt the rage of Saul against the Church,—“Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *me*.” Hearty friends *freely unbosom themselves to one another*. And they are mindful of one another, though absent. In all these, and many other ways, Jesus shews Himself a most tender and affectionate friend.

Jesus Christ is a *faithful* friend. There are some who would be thought mighty good friends; they do nothing but flatter us, and commend everything we say and do, though it be never so wrong, and humour us in all our follies and vices. But there is no friendship in this. It is sometimes very hard to *act* the faithful part, on the one side, or to *bear* a faithful part on the other. Christ is a *faithful* friend. “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.” He is a *powerful* friend. We may have many sincere friends,

and yet be never the better for them ; they may wish us well, but that may be all they can do ; they may be poor and feeble, and want help themselves. But if we have a friend as rich as he is kind, then we think ourselves well off ; and if ever we come to be in straits, we know where to go for a supply. And who is so rich as Christ ? He is appointed heir of all things. "It hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." He is a *constant* friend. "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them to the end." This is not always the case with human friendships. Sometimes a trifle shall dissolve them ; and those who have been for years hearty friends shall become bitter enemies to one another. But where Christ once fixes His love, He never takes it away ; His affection does not change with their condition ; He never looks shy upon them because they are poor and in distress. Christ's friendship not only extends itself through all the changes of life, but also through death and eternity. Earthly friends, let them stick never so close, must part at death. If they accompany us to the brink of the grave, there they take their

leave, and bid us a long farewell. But Christ is a friend who will stick closest when all earthly comforts drop off.

If we have such a friend as Jesus, let us shew ourselves grateful and affectionate. He sympathises with us in all our griefs and joys. Do we so with Him? Do we prefer Jerusalem above our chief joy?

“ Now I have found a Friend,
Whose love shall never end,—
 Jesus is mine.
Though earthly joys decrease,
Though human friendships cease,
Now I have lasting peace,—
 Jesus is mine.

“ Though I grow poor and old,
He will my faith uphold,—
 Jesus is mine.
He shall my wants supply;
His precious blood is nigh;
Nought can my hope destroy,—
 Jesus is mine.

“ When earth shall pass away,
In the great judgment day,
 Jesus is mine.
Oh, what a glorious thing,
Then to uphold my King,
On tuneful harps to sing,
 Jesus is mine !”

JESUS A FRIEND.

- “ Farewell mortality !
Welcome eternity !
 Jesus is mine.
He my redemption is,
Wisdom and righteousness,
Life, light, and holiness :—
 Jesus is mine.
- “ Father ! Thy name I bless,
Thine was the sovereign grace ;
 Praise shall be Thine.
Spirit of holiness,
Sealing the Father’s grace,
Thou mad’st my soul embrace
 Jesus as mine.

Hope.

ROM. xv. 13.

“Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.”

LAM. iii. 24, 25.

“The Lord is my portion, saith my soul ; therefore *will I hope in him*. The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.”

PROV. xiv. 32.

“The righteous hath hope in his death.”

1 JOHN iii. 3.

“Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure.”

HOS. ii. 15.

“And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope ; and she shall sing there as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.”

- “ My bark is on a troubled sea ;
The winds and waves may adverse be ;
But hope, my anchor ’s firmly cast
Within the veil, for ever fast.**
- “ How oft, when tempest-toss’d at night,
I watch in vain for dawning light,
Yet think, when terrors would prevail,
My anchor is within the veil :**
- “ Within the veil,—where Jesus stands,
And shews to God His blood-stain’d hands ;
Within the veil,—He went to bear
My name upon the breastplate there.**
- “ My hope must have His righteousness,
For it can rest on nothing less ;
Within the veil,—is still my prayer ;
Oh, may my anchor enter there !**
- “ Although the billows round me roll,
They never can o’erwhelm my soul ;
Within the veil my anchor ’s cast,
Unshaken by the stormy blast.**
- “ Whene’er I quit this changing scene,
May I depart in hope serene ;
And find, when heart and flesh shall fail,
My anchor cast within the veil.”**

Ps. xiii. 5.

“Hope thou in God.”



ELLOW-CHRISTIAN, we live in trying times. Nations are convulsed, thrones totter, crowns fall, convulsion reigns, and men's hearts are failing them for fear. We cannot but *feel*; but we ought not to *fear*. There is enough to make us watch and pray, but not enough to deject or cast us down. The Lord reigneth. Our Saviour has all power in heaven and in earth. He directs every event, and will overrule every occurrence for the fulfilment of His word, and the good of His people. “He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.”

Beloved, are you passing through storms, tempests, and trials? Hope in God, whatever your trial may be? Are you sick? He will make your bed, and *sanctify* your pain. Are you poor? He will answer your prayers, and supply all you need. Are you sorrowful?

He will comfort you, and give you joy for your sorrow. Are you tempted? He will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able to bear. Are you bereaved? He will be better to you than ten children. He will be a father to the fatherless, and a husband to the widow. Are you in perplexity? He will bring the blind by a way that they know not, and make your way plain before you. Whatever may be your trial, whether inward or outward, personal or relative, spiritual or temporal, still "*hope in God*."

Hope, and do not *fret*, though the wicked prosper, and everything seems to be against you. Hope, and do not *murmur*; for you have a thousand mercies more than you deserve, and more than some of your fellow-pilgrims. Hope, and do not *despond*; for all things shall work together for your good; your God hath His way in the whirlwind and in the storm. Hope, and do not *forebode*; for light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart. Hope, and do not *complain*; for your Lord forewarned you of all that has happened. He told you that in the world you should have tribulation, but in Him you should have peace. Hope, and do

not *dread*; no, not even death; for He that hath delivered doth deliver, and He will yet deliver you. He hath delivered you in *six* troubles, and in *seven* will not forsake you.

Hope in God; for *He is* gracious, merciful, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. He is faithful to His word. He is full of love to His children. He is pledged by His word to be a Father to you. He will not fail you, nor forsake you. He will surely do you good, and do you good even by your present trials and troubles. Hope in God; for *He has* an infinite variety of blessings to bestow. He has all you need, and has it for you. He has all that you ever will want, and He will supply all you need. He has all you can consistently desire, and He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him; He also will hear their cry, and will save them. Hope in God; for *He has said* to the coming sinner, "I will in no wise cast out,"—to the tried saint, "My grace is sufficient for thee,"—to the weary, way-worn pilgrim to the celestial country, "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass, and as is thy days, so thy strength shall be,"—to each Christian,

“I will never leave thee, I will never, no never, forsake thee.” Hope thou in God; for *He will do* as He has said; yea, He will do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think. He will make all His goodness pass before us, and shew us great and mighty things which we know not.

Hope in God; for you *may*; His invitations warrant you. You *ought*; for His commands lay you under obligation. You *should*; for His promises are exceedingly great and very precious. Hope, then, IN GOD,—not in circumstances, however favourable,—not in connexions, however encouraging,—not in evidences, however bright,—not in prospects, however blooming. Hope in God, when you read His word, when you attend His ordinances, when you face His foes, when you circulate His truth, when He hides His face, when your comforts wither, when your gourds die, when friends forsake you, when foes slander you, when health declines, when poverty approaches, when storms gather, when Satan assaults, and when death stares you in the face. Hope, and be not dismayed. Let hope be the helmet that guards your head, the anchor that steadies

your vessel, and the friend that holds up your head when the water-floods overflow you. In a word, at all times, in all places, under all circumstances, "*hope thou in God*," for "thou shalt yet praise Him who is the health of thy countenance and thy God."

"O Lord, be my Guide and Guard through the remainder of my pilgrimage. In hope of the resurrection to eternal life may I live. When I fall asleep, may it be in the blessed conviction, that when Christ shall come to be glorified in His saints, I shall be found of Him in peace, and be for ever with the Lord."

"Cling to the Mighty One,
Cling in thy grief;
Cling to the Holy One,
He gives relief;
Cling to the Gracious One,
Cling in thy pain;
Cling to the Faithful One,
He will sustain.

"Cling to the Living One,
Cling in thy woe;
Cling to the Loving One,
Through all below;
Cling to the Pard'ning One,
He speaketh peace;
Cling to the Healing One,
Anguish shall cease.

HOPE.

“ Cling to the Bleeding One,
Cling to His side ;
Cling to the Risen One,
In Him abide ;
Cling to the Coming One,
Hope shall arise :
Cling to the Reigning One,
Joy light thine eyes.”

Dibine Superintendence.

PS. CXXV. 1. 2.

“They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even for ever.”

ISA. XLIII. 1.

“Fear not : for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name ; *thou art mine.*”

JER. X. 23, 24.

“O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself : it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. O Lord, correct me, but with judgment ; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.”

PS. XVII. 8.

“Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings.”

ZECH. II. 8.

“He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye.”

"Father, I know that all my life
Is portion'd out by Thee,
And the changes which are sure to come
I do not fear to see ;
But I ask Thee for a present mind,
Intent on pleasing Thee.

"I ask Thee for a thoughtful love,
Through constant watching, wise,
To meet the glad with joyful smiles,
And to wipe the weeping eyes ;
And a heart at leisure from itself,
To soothe and sympathise.

"I would not have the restless will
That hurries to and fro,
Seeking for some great thing to do,
Or secret thing to know ;
I would be treated as a child,
And guided where I go.

"So, I ask Thee for the daily strength,
To none that ask denied,
And a mind to blend with outward life,
While keeping at Thy side ;
Content to fill a little space,
If Thou be glorified.

"And if some things I do not ask
In my cup of blessing be,
I would have my spirit fill'd the more,
With grateful love to Thee ;
More careful not to serve Thee *much*,
But to please Thee perfectly."

A. L. W.

Ps. xxxi. 15.

“My times are in THY hand.”

“**M**Y times are in thy hand”—manifestly the changes and vicissitudes of life. *Times of worldly prosperity and adversity.* He fixes the bounds of every one’s habitation, and determines his lot. The rapid and arbitrary changes in the scenes of some men’s lives may render this more apparent in their case than in others ; but the same hand is equally efficient in all. God does not, indeed, interfere with the natural liberty of man ; yet the final issues of things depend entirely on His will. He weaves the threads of every man’s life, so as to constitute it the particular piece that was intended : “The lot is cast into the lap ; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.”

Such a recognition promotes *acquiescence*, by a conviction of the Divine wisdom and goodness in all providential permissions and

allotments. There we must seek repose, and not from *a discovery of the design* of each event. Such knowledge is too wonderful for us ; it is high we cannot attain to it. "All these things worketh God after the counsels of his own will, and giveth not an account of any of his matters." We may vex ourselves with the false conclusions we draw, or with our inability to unravel the web ; but we only shew thereby our own folly, and achieve our own injury. We alter nothing—

"God's own eternal thought moves on
His undisturb'd affairs."

And He contents Himself with replying to all our cavils and dictation : "Should it be according to thy mind?" "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

It is but a common word that we speak to our afflicted friends when we say that *God has done* it, and because of its commonness it often falls upon unheeding ears, and therefore fails to reach the sorrowing heart. But its very commonness attests its truth by attesting its universal belief. The great thing is to recognise, to *feel* it as a truth.

Oh! this of itself were a sufficient antidote for all human sorrow. "My times are in THY hands."

From the agency of God in all human affairs, good people should derive *comfort* and *confidence*. *Their* preservation, improvement, and welfare, are in the best hands. The appointment of the events of all lives is with God, so that none can alter that appointment, or hinder it from taking effect. Whatever be the cast of events, they can have nothing in them destructive or overwhelming either to their principles or happiness. Look at those events that are of an *afflictive nature*; they shall proceed, only so far as to afford occasion for the interpositions of an ever-watchful Providence in their support and deliverance, and no further. But our greatest peril is in *times of prosperity*. Danger lurks most abundantly in scenes the most agreeable to us. We are thrown off our guard by the smooth and tranquil flow of events, and remit our care to avoid temptation. But these times of prosperity also are in His hands. He dispenses them with guards and checks, and counterparts. Usually He gives them not till He has pre-

pared us by some previous disasters against their seductive influence. Thus, Paul was prepared against the danger of pride, by the thorn in the flesh ; and David against the seductions of royal splendour, by the persecutions of the desert.

How calm and easy might we be, under all events, by the due influence of such considerations ! It must be a happiness to the Christian to see the affairs *of the world* in such good hands. He can thus anticipate order to arise out of confusion, and general good out of partial evil. He therefore can be calm in the midst of tumult ; where others see only a natural agency, or a mass of confusion, he descries the Deity presiding. What makes them wonder makes Him adore. But it is a much greater happiness to him to see *his own affairs* in the hands of God ; since, to him, God is a God in covenant. “*My times,*” he says, “are in Thy hand ; the hand of one who cannot but notice me, cannot but care for me, cannot but intend my benefit.”

To invite and encourage us to this, God graciously assumes to Himself our *care*, and commands us to leave it with Him ; “Casting

your care upon him, for he careth for you." What superior persons might we be to others in indifference to *events*, were we faithful to our principles! What honour might we bring to our religion by this holy and unruffled serenity, amidst great vicissitudes, or under the approach of violent changes! Our minds firm and unmoved, like the inhabitants of a peaceful island in the midst of a tumultuous sea, would be objects of admiration and envy to the spectators tossed upon its surges. Let us aspire to this tranquillity. Now we are happy who can say—

"O Lord, I cast my care on Thee,
I triumph and adore;
Henceforth my great concern shall be,
To love and praise Thee more."

Should *death* enter our circle, and take away some desire of our heart at a stroke; as we value the honour of our religion, and the glory of shining in the passive graces, let us refrain from querulous murmurings. We disturb ourselves with perplexing questions respecting the loss of a relative. Why was *he* singled out? Why did the fatal dart strike *him*? Why was no relief at hand? Why could no medicines cure; no prayers

116 *DIVINE SUPERINTENDENCE.*

and wishes prevail? We make mere circumstances to aggravate our loss. We blame the physician for want of skill, the nurse for want of care, ourselves for want of foresight, the remedies for want of efficacy. We blame the air for malignancy, the disease for obstinacy, the vehicles of conveyance from place to place for tardiness or inconvenience. Thus we feed our grief by the supposed *avoidableness* of the event. But how would all such murmuring be checked by a distinct recognition of the Divine sovereignty and agency? "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth because THOU DIDST IT."

Go, then, Christian, cease from your useless grief. Starve it by withdrawing your mind from the topics that inflame it. Keep the fuel from the fire and it will go out. Go, retract your censures, arouse yourself from your unprofitable languor, *look round on the mercies left you*, and busy yourself in turning the loss you have sustained to a good account, by making it productive of lessons for the living, and of incentives to your own "closer walk with God." He who acts thus shall collect a gem out of the dust of mortality, and deck himself with laurels plucked from the tomb.

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“O Lord, whatever ‘times’ go over me, let me always recognise Thy gracious hand. When I am gladdened by ‘*times of prosperity*,’ let me be careful to acknowledge the Giver, and to enjoy unimpaired the gift—humble, cautious, grateful. When I am made sad by ‘*times of adversity*,’ let me remember the moral purpose of every such visitation. And when the *time of death* shall come, when ‘the silver cord shall be loosed, and the pitcher be broken at the fountain;’ when I am summoned to walk through the dark valley, then may I feel THY HAND upholding me. ‘I will fear no evil.’ May I be found among the redeemed and the holy, sitting down in the kingdom of my Father, to go no more out for ever. And all this through faith, and through faith only—living, holy faith in the Blessed Christ.”

“ My times are in Thy hand,
O God, I wish them *there* ;
My life, my friends, my soul, I leave
Entirely to Thy care.

“ My times are in Thy hand,
Whatever they may be ;
Pleasing or painful, dark or bright,
As best may seem to Thee.

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“My times are in Thy hand ;
Why should I doubt or fear ?
*A Father's hand will never cause
His child a needless tear.*

“My times are in Thy hand,
Jesus the Crucified ;
The hand *my many sins* had pierced,
Is now my guard and guide.

“My times are in Thy hand,
Jesus my Advocate ;
Nor can that hand be stretched in vain,
For me to supplicate.

“My times are in Thy hand ;
I'll always trust in Thee,
Till I possess the glorious land,
Where I shall ever be.”

My Hiding-Place.

Ps. *xlvi.* 3.

“God is known in her palaces for a refuge.”

PROV. *xviii.* 10.

“The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.”

ISA. *xliii.* 2.

“When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.”

Ps. *xlvi.* 1-3.

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.”

**"O brother, though innumerable waves
Still seem to rise betwixt me and my home,
I know that they are number'd; not one less
Should bear me homeward, if I had my will ;
For One who knows what tempests are to weather,
O'er whom there broke the wildest billows once,
He bids these waters swell. In His good time,
The *last* rough wave shall bear me on its bosom,
Into the haven of eternal peace.
No billows after! They are numbered, brother.
'O gentle mariner, steer on, steer on ;
My tears still flow for thee, but they are tears
In which faith strives with grief, and overcomes.'"**

ISA. xxxii. 2.

“And a man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest.”



MAN! you cry, with visible disappointment. Is all your boasted refuge come to this? *A man!* What can a *man* do—what can all the *men* in the world do to screen me *from* trouble, or support me *in* it? Ah, if you can tell me of nothing better than a man, there is no hope! No! A much less storm than this before me, would crush me to atoms. A *man* my hiding-place! You do but mock my woe. If you had told me of Michael the archangel,—or if you could have assured me, and convinced me, that twelve legions, or one legion, of angels, that excel in strength, would be instantly despatched for my relief,—that would have been something. But to bid me be easy and fear nothing, and then tell me of a *man* that will undertake to secure me! How can you expect that I—

Not so fast. I *did* say, "A man shall be a hiding-place from the wind," and I say it again; and when you come to know *who* this Man is, you will be satisfied that I could not have directed you better, and that it is the same as if I had said, "Turn ye to the *stronghold*, ye prisoners of hope." Know, then, that the *Man* here alluded to is no other than the "*Man Christ Jesus*," the same as is called the "*Son of man*," such a Man as never before was heard of,—a Man in whom dwelt all "the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

"This is the Man, the exalted Man,
Whom we, unseen, adore;
But when our eyes behold His face,
Our hearts shall love Him more."

Now, then, I hope your fears are a little subsided; and you begin to think, that if you are found in Christ, no storms can hurt you.

What a blessed covert Christ is in all the storms through which we pass! Look at that poor penitent, how he labours and is heavy laden! Hark! how piteously he bemoans himself! "Oh, these cursed sins of mine, to what wretchedness have they brought me! These are the sins that have broken my

peace, and robbed me of my chief glory, and rendered me loathsome to God and myself. I am afraid to look up to *Him*, and I am ashamed that He should look down on me. O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me ? ” I will tell you who—*the Man Christ Jesus*. “ The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from *all* sin. ” That precious blood hath made satisfaction to Divine justice for every sin of every penitent believer ; and if you are such, *your* sins, numerous as they are, shall be like a debt cancelled, which can never be demanded more,—or a stain washed out, which can never be seen more. “ He was wounded for *our* transgressions, and bruised for *our* iniquities. . . . It pleased the Lord to bruise him ; he hath put him to grief, ” so that the dreadful storm of God’s wrath spent itself entirely on the Man Christ Jesus. If you see a thunder-storm gathering, and have time to get to a castle, or some other firm building, you do not heed the rattling tempest without ; let it blow, let it rain, let it thunder ; you are dry, and safe, and easy. So it is with the soul, when it betakes itself to Christ. Now I am afraid of nothing. “ There is therefore no condemna-

tion to them that are in Christ Jesus." *Now*, if God were to frown and threaten to strike me, I would step behind this *Man*, and say, "Behold, O God, my shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed."

"My Advocate appears
For my defence on high ;
The Father bows His ears,
And lays His thunder by ;
Nor all that hell or sin can say,
Shall turn His heart, His love, away."

Reader, I hope you rejoice to see what a comfortable and safe hiding-place Christ is in the tempestuous season of convictions. And if there were nothing more to recommend Him, this would be enough. But when this storm is blown over, there are many other blustering winds and piteous tempests that you may expect to meet with.

Sore temptations. Satan is always an adversary, and the soul is always in danger ; but there are some particular seasons when the danger is more immediate and pressing. It was such a season that the apostle referred to when he said, "Wherefore take yourselves the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day." Sometimes, like an old serpent, he lieth in wait to

deceive ; at other times, like a roaring lion, he seeketh to devour ; but whichever way it is, he pushes his temptations with such violence and constancy, that the poor, trembling believer is ready to cry out in despair, " I shall one day perish by the hand of Satan ; I never can hold out against such frequent and fierce attacks. Never was any one so harassed. It signifies nothing to resist any longer. O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me ? " I will tell you who—*the Man Christ Jesus*. He will be a covert from this tempest too. " For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities ; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. " He encountered the powers of darkness and overcame them, and led captivity captive.

Great encouragement this to tempted Christians ! You have a friend in heaven, who ever liveth, making intercession for you. While you are struggling *below*, Jesus is praying for you *above*. The storm is gathering sometimes a great while before it falls ; but we think nothing of it, and go on quite thoughtless and serene, till it darts over our head and

surprises us at a disadvantage ; and the consequences would be fatal, if our ever-watchful Guardian did not foresee the intended mischief, and counter-work the designs of our enemy. “ And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat ; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.”

Depend upon it, the only safe hiding-place in troublesome times is the Man Christ Jesus. I do not mean that He will always screen you *from* trouble, or presently deliver you *out* of it ; there is a “*need be,*” sometimes that you should be “in heaviness through manifold temptations.” Many, when they are smarting under the rod, are apt to say, “If God had taken away any other of my comforts, I could have borne it. If it had not been for this or that circumstance in my trouble, I should not have minded it.” Why, *then* the affliction would have done you no good ; you would have despised the chastening of the Lord ; or, at least, you would not have been roused by it to that humble dependence upon God, which this smarting trial was intended to bring you to.

The hour of death is a trying time, which

all must pass through. If we escape all other storms, we must come to Jordan at last. And the passage is oftentimes tedious and tempestuous. Many things concur to make it so ;

“ The pains, the groans, the dying strife ; ”

the parting with houses and estates, with family and friends, and everything we loved in this life ; and the thought that in a few hours we are to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.

Now, what is the best covert in this tempest? Whither must a person in the agonies of death look for comfort? The world cannot help him ; if he had his house full of gold it would not give a moment's ease to his tortured body or his aching heart. Friends cannot help him ; they pity him ; they weep over him ; they wish him safely through ; but their tender soothings only serve to increase his distress. No ; he looks on his right hand, and on his left, but refuge fails him ; but—“ a *man* shall be a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest.”

“ Jesus can make a dying bed

Feel soft as downy pillows are ;

While on His breast I lean my head,

And breathe my life out sweetly there.”

Adorable Immanuel! if it had not been for *Thee* such a storm would have crushed me; if I had not taken shelter in Thine arms, such a tempest would have hurled me into hell. And art Thou the Man that was my covert from every storm? Gracious, glorious Lord! I see now that I owe all I was and all I am to Thy free and boundless love. Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh. If I had seen Thee in the days of Thy humiliation, I might have thought it impossible Thou shouldst *be God*; and now I see Thee in Thy glory, I wonder how Thou couldst be *man*. But I know Thou wast both; and it is well for me Thou wast: if Thou hadst not been both God and man, I, and millions more, had never been here. Glory, glory, glory to Immanuel, our hiding-place on earth, and our dwelling-place in heaven. "Let all the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy." Glory, glory, glory to Immanuel.

"For ever His dear sacred name
Shall dwell upon our tongue;
And Jesus and salvation be
The close of every song."

Secret Prayer.

DAN. vi. 10.

“Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house ; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.”

MATT. xxi. 22.

“And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.”

ROM. viii. 26.

“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities : for we know not what we should pray for as we ought : but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”

2 KINGS iv. 32. 33.

“And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, *and* laid upon his bed. He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the Lord.”

“ Christian, pray, for life is fleeting,
Friends for thee will soon be weeping,
'Neath the sod thou wilt be sleeping,—
Christian, pray.

“ Pray when sorrow hovers near thee,
Pray when life seems dark and dreary,
And thy heart is sad and weary,—
Christian, pray.

“ Christian, pray, when loved ones leave thee,
Pray when trials sad bereave thee,
When life's darksome billows heave thee,—
Christian, pray.

“ Pray, on *His* kind bosom leaning,
Who thy heart from earth is weaning ;
Dark the seed, but bright the gleaning,—
Christian, pray.

“ Christian, pray, when life is brightsome,
When thy heart is glad and lightsome,
Pray, for it may soon be nightsome,—
Christian, pray.

“ Pray, for sadness soon will follow,
Dark and drear may be the morrow,
Joy is ever near to sorrow,—
Christian, pray.

“ Christian, pray, in joy or sadness,
When life's waves is lash'd to madness,
Tears will soon be turn'd to gladness,—
Christian, pray.

“ Pray, for life on earth is fleeting,
Thou wilt soon the angels greeting,
Rest, where storms no more are beating,—
Christian, pray.”

MATT. vi. 6

“But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.”



THIS is a precept of our blessed Saviour, who had just declared that it was a proof of hypocrisy to make long prayers in public, “in the streets and in the synagogues.” That is, to make prayers in public *only*. It is a duty to join in public devotion. We are forbidden to “forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is,” and great blessings are promised where “two or three agree as touching anything” which they will ask of God. But many people love to pray “in the synagogue to be seen of men,” who pray nowhere else. They delight in the display and the excitement of a prayer-meeting, but have no relish for the closet. These are hypocrites. Indeed, they do not pray at all,

for the man who does not pray in "secret" prays not at all. This is prayer by eminence.

"*When* thou prayest." Prayer then should have its appropriate season. A portion of time should be set apart for a work of such grave import. It must not be left to accident—to be done when we can do nothing else. We must retire from the world, from business, into our "closets"—to our hearts. It is a duty which demands recollection, calmness, and honest, uninterrupted self-examination. Many Christians have no set time for prayer. They pray when they *feel* like it—when they are *drawn* to this duty. They think it formal—a kind of spiritual bondage—to obey *any* rule in their devotions. Many professors satisfy themselves with offering occasional ejaculations in the midst of employment, or in company, and think that in this way they pray in secret. Others are content with kneeling down by their bedsides when they retire at night, and when they rise in the morning. Why, if this is sufficient, did our Saviour bid us "enter into the closet and shut the door?" Why all this *particularity*, this minuteness of detail? Does it mean nothing? Will He accept the fitful, conve-

nient petitions of those who, through indolence, or irreverence, or haste, slight His commandments, and follow their own fancies?

This, which to many may appear a very small matter, is often productive of very important effects ; partly because the blessed Saviour is more likely to meet and "reward" those who render an humble and simple obedience, and partly because persons who do not think prayer a work of such magnitude as to require the appropriation of special and regular seasons, will very soon cease to pray altogether. Or if they pray at all, it will no longer be "in spirit and in truth." The Father who seeth in secret shall see there no real devotion. A few vain repetitions, a few unmeaning confessions, a few "groans," which the heart never utters : the sad countenance, and the canonical attitude, are the wretched substitutes which we often present before God, in the place of true spiritual worship. The "reward" of this disobedience, the fruit of "sowing to the flesh," will soon become manifest. While the humble disciple who follows the command of his Lord with a simple child-like obedience, and night and morning "enters into his closet, shuts

the door, and prays to the Father who seeth in secret," shall "grow in grace," be strengthened with "might in the inner man," and be thus enabled "to walk in newness of life." The careless professor, who is "wise above what is written," who is too spiritual to heed times and seasons, who only prays when feeling prompts, when sorrow oppresses, or when the voice of the multitude excites or lauds his devotions, becomes as "clouds without water;" "trees whose fruit withereth, twice dead plucked up by the roots."

How strange that guilty worms of the earth should attempt to prescribe the terms upon which they will receive grace and crowns of glory! How strange that Christians should ever fail to follow the example and precepts of their Lawgiver with a universal and grateful submission! We are ignorant. We know not how to pray as we ought, nor what to pray for. We lift up our voice to the Great Teacher to "teach us how to pray." He condescends to direct our erring footsteps. He bids us "enter into our closets, and when we have shut the door, to pray to the Father who seeth in secret." Brother, have you found out a more excellent way?

What hour of devotion has left the holiest savour upon thy soul? When did you feel the adorable Redeemer most near and most precious? When was the world most effectually stripped of its meretricious charms? When did your faith most deeply realise the "unseen?" and when did you go forth to your "warfare" as "a strong man armed?" Doubtless you found these blessings in the "closet." There seek them in all future time. It is Christ's *audience chamber*, and nowhere else can you come so near to the throne of grace.

"Heavenly Father, *teach me how to pray.* Teach me to pray in faith; in all humility and lowliness; with perseverance. Teach me to approach Thy footstool with filial fear, and with all boldness and freedom of utterance, pleading the promises in the name of Him in whom they all are Yea and Amen. Teach me, O God, to enter into my closet, and shut the door, and pray to my Father who seeth and heareth in secret. May the Spirit pray within me. May the Saviour pray for me. Let the words of my mouth, and the mediations of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer. Amen."

SECRET PRAYER.

“ Come to the morning prayer,
Come let us kneel and pray ;
Prayer is the Christian’s pilgrim’s staff,
To walk with God all day.

“ At noon beneath the Rock
Of Ages rest and pray ;
Sweet is the shadow from the heat,
When the sun smites by day.

“ At eve shut to the door,
' Round the home-altar pray,
And finding there ‘the house of God,’
At ‘heaven’s gate’ close the day.

“ When midnight seals our eyes
Let each in spirit say,
I sleep, but my heart waketh, Lord,
With Thee to watch and pray.”

Lost Friends.

GEN. xxiii. 4-6.

“I am a stranger and a sojourner with you : give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight. And the children of Heth answered Abraham, saying unto him, Hear us, my lord : Thou art a mighty prince among us,” &c.

PROV. xxvii. 10.

“Thine own friend, and thy father’s friend, forsake not.”

JOHN xi. 11.

“Our friend Lazarus sleepeth ; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.”

PROV. xvii. 17.

“A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.”

PROV. xxvii. 17.

“Iron sharpeneth iron ; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.”

**“ There is no flock, however watch'd and tended,
But one dead lamb is there !
There is no fireside, howe'er defended,
But has one vacant chair.**

**“ The air is full of farewells to the dying,
And mourning for the dead ;
The heart of Rachel for her children crying,
Will not be comforted.**

**“ Let us be patient ! these severe afflictions
Not from the ground arise ;
But oftentimes celestial benedictions
Assume this dark disguise.**

**“ We see but dimly through the mists and vapours,
Amid these earthly damps ;
What seem to us but sad funereal tapers,
May be heaven's distant lamps.”**

H. W. LONGFELLOW.

Ps. lxxxviii. 18.

“Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness.”



VERY one has friends, and every one can sympathise with the joys and pains so indissolubly connected with affection's exercise. But, alas! if it be true that all of us *have* friends, I fear the fact is equally universal, that all of us *have had* friends who are now lost to us for ever.

“There is no union here of hearts,
That finds not here an end.”

How many bosoms in every corner of the globe are heaving every day with the ready response to this mournful sentiment! Is there one who has spent though but a few brief summers on the shore of time, upon whose mind the world, as it really is, is just beginning to dawn, who cannot already reckon upon some one or more friends whose countenance beamed upon his infant

years, now dark in the dust of the grave? Scarce have we passed the portals of our greenest youth, when we are startled to miss some of those dear companions who began their pilgrimage along with us. They may not have been taken from our own immediate household, and so the blank is the less felt. But hardly has the wheel of time made another revolution, than, perchance, the arrow is aimed closer—it strikes home to our very heart,—a father or a mother,—a brother or a sister, or if none of these, at least a favourite playmate ; it may be the inmate, too, of our own happy dwelling, is hurried away to the tomb, and a new strange weight falls on our soul ; and our eyes are dim with incessant weeping.

Ah ! reader, let me ask you, have you suffered the loss of any who were *very* dear to you, and do you not sympathise with these sentiments? Have you a father or a mother, a son or a daughter, a brother, a sister, or a friend, whom once you cherished upon earth, now shut out for ever from your sight beneath the churchyard sod ; and is there not a yearning of affection over that lost one in your spirit *now*, that never pos-

sessed it while the bloom of life was around him? But, perhaps, yours has been a bereavement of another sort. Parents and kindred are still all around you ; but she, the gentle being who was the star of your youth, the bride affianced of your future career, has withered away from your path, like a flower cut down in the dewy light of the morning. Alas! the cloud of grief which envelops you is indeed a heavy one, and yours are tears whose fountain cannot be dried ; for never again can the blossoms of a new love spring forth from the ashes of what is faded and gone. This is no idle dream ; it is a truth attested by melancholy experience. The heart may have many friendships, but only *one* love. Oh ! then, let none, in the thoughtlessness of light-hearted youth, or the cold worldly mindedness of maturer years, ever attempt to depreciate the power of affection's first impression.

It has often been to me a subject of wondering meditation, that in so many instances the dead should be so *soon forgotten*. Even the most loving and best beloved, with whom we have lived for years in close and endearing companionship, how *soon* their loss ceases to

grieve us ; how *soon* their memories pass almost quite away ! This year they are beside us, speaking, smiling, weeping along with us in all the affected sympathy of congenial hearts ; the next, they are lifeless, perished, lost, buried for ever out of our sight in the dismal cemetery. Did we love them ? Yes, verily ; and with our whole souls. Often when we have looked upon them in their health and bloom, have we thought how, deprived of *their* presence, existence would be a sunless blank ; and keeping death and separation far out of view, have we not sickened at the bare idea of sorrow or disease overtaking them, even for one hour ? Did we love them ? Oh yes, and with a tenderness of which we were ourselves at times almost ashamed, and eager to hide it within the recesses of our own bosoms. We did love them deeply, fondly, faithfully ; and yet we behold them no more ; their places are lone by our boards and our hearths, the grave has received its victims ; but still we look, we talk, we hope, we fear, we grieve, and we rejoice, very nearly as of yore. We mourned them a while, their remembrance was green upon our souls, and we daily watered its

silent garden with the showers of bitter sadness ; but gradually, imperceptibly, the sacred impression abated, other objects arose to divert the current of our thoughts, and ere we were aware of our strange apostasy, the blessed, the *beloved* dead had passed away (shall I say) into oblivion. Unfathomable heart of man ! mysterious arrangement of Omniscience ! that what we love with distraction in life, we should be able to consign to forgetfulness in death.

Let no one tell me that this is an exaggerated picture ; its truth is attested by the most ordinary observation ; and though, doubtless, there are seasons when the thought of lost friends rushes, with intense and solemn power, upon the soul, even of the most contemplative—hours sad and solitary, when every image of present enjoyment is merged in the broodings of an all-absorbing memory ; yet still, in as far as regards the general tenor of our feelings, it is with living and tangible objects that we seek most to be associated.

To mourn for a season is natural, but to mourn always with the same measure of wretchedness, has been wisely denied to the great mass of mankind. There are excep-

tions, undeniably, to this rule. There are beautiful spirits, to whom the affection of their friends is the very air they breathe ; whose tender devotedness the grave of its idols only consecrates to greener fidelity. These are to be honoured and revered, for they are bright, particular stars in the dark hemisphere of more selfish natures. Still they are only the illustrious few, and while we admire their rare excellence, we can scarce desire that their numbers be multiplied.

“Friend after friend departs,—
Who nath not lost a friend ?”

Not one ; and if we turn for a moment from human to Divine experience, we shall find even *there* additional evidence how transient are all mortal attachments. The Saviour had those dear to Him, whom He lost, and whom He mourned. He loved Lazarus ; but Lazarus died, and “Jesus wept” at the sepulchre of His departed brother. Oh, then, let us not frustrate that grace which would make the loss of our dearest friends subservient to our unspeakable gain ; so that at last, when the hour of our departure comes, this testimony may be borne to us by those

who shall mourn for us:—"Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord."

"Remember, O Lord God, my kindred and friends. Suffer them not to walk in their own ways. Let them all be partakers of Thy richest benefits. Oh, draw them all into Thy family by the spirit of adoption, that at the great judgment-day we may be found at **THY RIGHT HAND.**"

" 'Himself hath done it all.'—Oh, how those words
Should hush to silence every murmuring thought!

'Himself hath done it'—He who loves me best,
He who my soul with His own blood hath bought.

" 'Himself hath done it'—can it then be aught
Than full of wisdom, full of tenderest love? .
Not *one* unneeded sorrow will He send,
To teach this wandering heart no more to rove.

" 'Himself hath done it.'—Yes, although severe
May seem the stroke, and bitter be the cup,
'Tis His own hand that holds it, and I know
He 'll give me grace to drink it meekly up.

" 'Himself hath done it.'—Oh, no arm but His
Could e'er sustain beneath earth's dreary lot!
But while I know He's doing all things well,
My heart His loving-kindness questions not.

" 'Himself hath done it.'—He would have me see
What broken cisterns human friends *must* prove,
That I may turn and quench my burning thirst
At His own fount of *ever-living* love.

G

- “ ‘Himself hath done it’—then I fain would say,
 ‘Thy will in *all* things evermore be done ;’
 E’en though that will remove whom best I love,
 While Jesus lives I cannot be alone.
- “ ‘Himself hath done it’—precious, precious words ;
 ‘Himself,’ my Father, Saviour, Brother, Friend ;
 Whose faithfulness no variation knows ;
 Who, having loved me, loves me *to the end*.
- “ And when in His eternal presence blest,
 I at His feet my crown immortal cast ;
 I ’ll gladly own, with all His ransom’d saints,
 ‘Himself hath done it’—all, from first to last.”

A PILGRIM SONG.

I journey along,
 On a cloudy day,
 Apart from the throng
 Of the glad and gay.

But Jesus is near,
 More perfectly known,
 When we may appear
 To travel alone.

Those passing along
 With skies ever bright,
 Have lost the sweet song
 He gives in the night.

Communion with Angels.

Ps. lxxviii. 17.

“The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place.”

HEB. i. 14.

“Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”

DAN. vii. 10.

“A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.”

ACTS v. 19, 20.

“And the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison-doors, and brought them forth, and said, Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of *this life*.”

HEB. xiii. 2.

“Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”

Ps. xci. 11.

“He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.”

Ps. xxxiv. 7.

“The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.”

“ And is there care in heaven ? and is there love
In heavenly spirits to these creatures base,
That may compassion of their evils move ?
There is ; else much more wretched were the case
Of men than beasts ; but oh ! the exceeding grace
Of highest God ! that loves His creatures so,
And all His works with mercy doth embrace,
That blessed angels He sends to and fro,
To serve to wicked man, to serve His wicked foe.

“ How oft do they their silver bowers leave
To come to succour us, that succour want !
How oft do they with golden pinions cleave
The fitting skies like flying pursuivant,
Against foul fiends to aid us militant !
They for us fight, they watch and duly ward,
And their bright squadrons round about us plant ;
And all for love, and nothing for reward—
Oh, why should heavenly God to men have such regard !”

SPENSER.

HEB. xii. 22.

"We are come to an innumerable company of angels."



SEE, O my soul, what Omnipotence, under the influence of love and unbounded affection, can do ! Couldst thou ever think, when thou wast so lately a poor grovelling worm, a companion of fools, a slave to appetite and passion, and a willing captive of Satan, that thou shouldst enjoy such honour—to *hold communion with angels ?*

Does it not greatly endear those glorious beings to us, to hear that they are all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who are heirs of salvation ; and to find that amidst all the troubles and dangers of the wilderness, the Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him ? Is it not a distinguished privilege, that while evil spirits are doing their utmost to distress and destroy us, they are ever ready to confirm,

and warn, and defend, and comfort us? Will it not give us an inexpressible pleasure in our dying moments to have, and perhaps *to see*, a guard of angels around our beds, to take the charge of our departing souls, and convey them safe to Abraham's bosom? Do we not already long for their acquaintance? Should we not think ourselves infinitely obliged to him that would introduce us to them; as next to the enjoyment of God himself, being one of the highest honours of which we are capable? This then, Christian, has our Saviour done; thus highly are we advanced by the gospel. For they who shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world can die no more, for they are equal to the angels, and are the children of God.

We are *come* to an innumerable company of angels. We enjoy a communication and participation with them, in their privileges, pleasures, and advantages. We are subjects of the same kingdom, citizens of the same city, dear to the same God and Father. We shall behold the same glory, feel the delightful fervours of the same love, receive the communications of the same life, and bear our part in the same hallelujahs.

We are also come to the angels by our conformity to their tempers and designs. They are called seraphs, from their *fervent zeal* and *activity*. And, oh, how does the grace of the gospel assimilate our views and tempers to theirs ! As the light of the knowledge of God, in the face of Jesus Christ, has enlightened us, so His love shed abroad in our hearts, through the Holy Ghost, has made us fervent, and constrained us to obedience. Like those blessed spirits, we feel that to *please God is our delight*. That His glory in the success of the gospel is our prevailing desire ; that our services are spiritual ; and that we echo back a cheerful amen to the ascriptions of blessing, honour, glory, and power, which are made by the heavenly host, to Him who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever. This conformity, which is begun on earth, will ere long be completed in heaven—that world of everlasting harmony and blessedness.

We are come to the angels, as we have a *particular interest* in their *esteem* and *affections*. They love us because we love God and the Saviour. Our likeness to God, imperfect as it is, conciliates and confirms their

regard. They long for our perfection, and will most cheerfully congratulate our entrance into heaven. Who can describe the exultations of that day, when the whole family, both in heaven and earth, shall sit down together? What ecstasies of joy; what transports of affection; what expressions of mutual delight, will that general meeting produce!

Then has God raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Christian, would you envy the Jewish nation their law? Mount Sinai exhibited nothing in comparison with this. There was, indeed, a company of angels to be their guard and protection; but clouds and tempests were the only indication of their presence. They never spoke but in thunder, and kept the trembling Israelites at a distance, who would have shuddered at the prospect of association with them. Yet to this we are come. We are brought into one family and fellowship with them.

Come, Christian, awake psaltery and harp. Call upon your souls, and all that is within you, to assist while you are worshipping with angels. Let us tune our harps to the highest strains of gratitude and praise, while we

join the songs of that harmonious assembly. They love to see us active, and warm, and cheerful. Those ministers of His that do His pleasure, that hearken to the voice of His word, shame our slothful and reluctant services. While they cease not, day or night, from crying, with a loud voice, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God," we may blush at our low intermitting praises, which can scarcely be distinguished from sighs and complaints. Be all life and joy then, ye favoured servant of God. You have reason for it, for all is yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's. You are admitted to an innumerable company of angels; endeared to their God; entitled to their happiness; engaged in their services; and bound by covenant to be conformable to them in their temper and practice.

"Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commands, hearkening to the voice of his word. Bless the Lord, all ye his hosts, ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure. Bless the Lord, all his works, in all places of his dominion; BLESS THE LORD, O MY SOUL."

154 *COMMUNION with ANGELS.*

“Angels our servants are,
And keep in all our ways ;
And in their watchful hands they bear
The sacred sons of grace :
Unto that heavenly bliss
They all our steps attend ;
And God himself our Father is,
And Jesus is our Friend.

“With Him we walk in white ;
We in His image shine ;
Our robes are robes of glorious light—
Our righteousness divine :
On all the kings of earth
With pity we look down ;
And claim in virtue of our birth
A never-fading crown.”

Rest in Heaven.

REV. vii. 14-17.

“These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”

MATT. xi. 28.

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

REV. xiv. 13.

“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.”

DAN. xii. 13.

“For thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.”

" I hear a voice at dawn of day,
And to my heart it seems to say,
When sorrow dims hope's brightest ray,
' There 's rest in heaven.'

" I hear it at the evening tide,
When fitful shadows round us glide,
Still whispering gently at my side,
' There 's rest in heaven.'

" E'en at noon's busy hour I hear
The same sweet word accost my ear,
With power to stay the rising tear,—
' There 's rest in heaven.'

" Blest words ! which tell of naught but joy,
Of endless rest without alloy ;
Well may they oft our thoughts employ—
' There 's rest in heaven.'

" Spirit of life and love divine,
Subdue my heart, and make it Thine,
That I may dwell upon, as mine,
That 'rest in heaven.'

HEB. iv. 9.

“There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.”



HERE is a rest beyond the grave of which the Sabbaths of earth and the peace of the renewed soul are the emblems—namely, the REST OF HEAVEN, which has nothing to do with *death*, save that it follows it. Death is the most remote thing from it, for all is *life* there. No deadly autumn gale breathes upon its verdure, or blanches the cheek of the sufferer. No graves are opened there, making still wider chasms in the domestic circle and the widowed heart. No cemetery is there with its gloom; for gardens bright with lilies, and all “the painted populace of flowers,” fill the paradise of God. No mourners go along the streets when the golden bowl is broken, and the silver cord is loosed, and the wheel is broken at the cistern; for troops of young men and

maidens, companies of redeemed ones, clad in robes of white, are the only dwellers there. No funeral hymn or elegy is chanted there, pœans of joy and anthems of praise. The churchyard yews and the sable cypress are there unknown ; the foliage of the upper Eden being that of the trees of life planted by the river of the water of life. Life ! it is the life of life ; life without the seeds of decay ; life without stint ; life without end.

“ Dreams cannot picture a world so fair—
Sorrow and death may not enter there ;
Time doth not breathe on its fadeless bloom ;
Far beyond the clouds, and beyond the tomb,
It is there—it is there.”

And this is the rest of heaven ; the perpetual Sabbath of the skies. A topic, from its loftiness and infinitude, only perfectly comprehended by the infinite mind ; therefore, very disadvantageously discussed by a finite one ; nevertheless a topic, the most inadequate discussion of which cannot fail to do us good. By such meditations the heart is made better, and desires after heaven are enkindled upon its stony altar. With the older saint we cry, “ Oh that I had wings like a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest.” With the latter we have a “ desire to

depart to be with Christ, which is far better." Accompany me, then, with your prayers while I seek to produce these passionate desires for heaven in your renewed bosom, by painting its joys and occupations under the figure of a Sabbath. "There remaineth therefore a rest [or Sabbath keeping] to the people of God."

To the persecuted and often faint-hearted Hebrew believers this must have been a delightful revelation, that all which they suffered now would ere long give place to peace and joy, and the very pains they at present endured would only enhance the more the satisfaction to come. And so must it be to us. The turmoil of the earth harasses us ; the labour of the earth wearies us ; the vanity of the earth disappoints us ; and the sin of the earth haunts us like an uneasy spirit ; and we look forward to release from these afflictions with all the eagerness of the starving for food, or of the prisoner for the light.

"From all I suffer here,
If God my sins forgive ;
From all I feel and fear,
I then redeem'd shall live.
No serpent to deceive me—
No sin to stain my thought—

No loss or wrong to grieve me,
When all things are forgot."

IT IS A PERFECT REST—a rest undisturbed by the opposition of persons or principles, the ebullitions of our own corruption or impatience, or those necessities for corporeal labour which are so fruitful a source of weariness on earth. In the sweat of our brow we now eat our bread, whether it be by manual labour or by the application of the mental powers. But in heaven all this will cease. Exertion will cease with the cessation of its necessity. The leaven of toil will be swept away from our homes, because the paschal feast of eternity is begun. The occupation implied in the weary working days of earth is over, because the Sabbath that was to succeed has dawned. The anxiety about obtaining provision, which wore down our strength and spirits here—the labour to secure it exhausting—the amount, when gained, scanty and insufficient—the all of toil, which is connected with the original curse—all that is done away, and ample supplies, various provision, inexhaustible abundance furnished for every soul. There is appetite without hunger, fulness without sa-

tiety, desire without pain, and enjoyment without reaction there. Physical inconvenience is unknown there ; pain, sickness, death. Racking rheumatism and bloated dropsy, consumption that pales the lamp of life by degrees, and cholera that extinguishes it in a moment ; the thousand-hazarded life of infancy ; the tottering, toothless, decrepitude of old age ;—all that gnaws, wastes, kills, has no existence in heaven. “ They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more ; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters ; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes ; ” “ and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain : for the former things are passed away.”

But be it understood, nevertheless, that this is not absolute rest, *inactivity*, *indolence*. It is the cessation of woe, not work ; the absence of *pain*, not the absence of *employment*. As the quiet of our earthly Sabbath is consistent with the occupations of that hallowed season,—as works of charity and duty are still shedding on that day their

flowers over the weary life-track of humanity,—so is the rest of heaven consistent with unceasing occupation, study, praise. Thus *God rests in heaven*; but there is no abatement of the energy of Omnipotence. And *Jesus has* “entered into *His rest*,” but only the rest of a Priest and of a King. “He ever liveth to make intercession for us.” *The rest of the angels* is constant service, prompt obedience, reverential homage, and unceasing contemplation of the works of God and the wonders of redemption. “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” And *the rest of the saints* is worship, learning, and enjoyment. “They rest not day and night, crying—Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.” They realise the fervent aspiration we often breathe in sacred song,—

“Oh when, thou city of my God,
 Shall I thy courts ascend?
 Where congregations ne'er break up,
 And Sabbaths have no end.”

WE PRIZE THIS AS A SACRED REST. When speculating about the ingredients of our cup of bliss in another world, we may be right or wrong in any one of ten thousand different

suppositions ; but there can be no mistake when we assert holiness to be a chief ingredient. This is the passport to admission ; this is the condition of existence there : “ Follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.” “ There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie.” The only disqualification, in fact, is unholiness. The door of heaven is wide enough to admit poverty with its rags, disease with its loathsomeness, but no sinner with his sins. The law is positive—the exclusion certain ; no evasion, palliation, or excuse availing to exempt. The law of happiness in heaven is the same as the law of happiness on earth ; to be happy you must be holy. The robes in heaven are all white ; the souls regenerate—“ the just men perfect.”

WE REJOICE IN IT AS A PERMANENT REST. It “ *remaineth,*” and will *always be remaining.* In delightful contrast to our earthly Sabbath, which gives place to renewed toil, and to our life, which falls before the sickle of the great harvester, Death, the life and joys of the heavenly Sabbath know no end. Where is the Christian who

has not marked the close of the day of God, many a time and oft, with the deepest regret? And where is there a heart that has not had the fountain of its satisfactions frozen over by the chill intrusion of death? Is there a house that death has not visited? Is there a hearth which displays not its vacant chair?—a chamber that echoes not with the voice of bereaved Rachels weeping, because their loved ones are not? Well sang the poet,—

“Death is here, and death is there,
 Death is present everywhere;
 All above, around, beneath,
 Is death—and *we ourselves are death.*”

But all this is over and past in heaven. There is no death, and no end—*no end to anything*; difficult, indeed, to understand, but facile to believe. Joy has no end, service no end, and rest no end. The Sabbath glory never dims—the Sabbath breeze never hushes its music—the Sabbath convocation never disperses.

For the people of God rest remaineth. The people of God—the penitent, contrite, and converted; the people of God—the believing, humble, and holy; “the people of God”—“the *saint’s* everlasting rest,” as Baxter has

called it—not the *sinner's*. The world to come has no Sabbath for the sinner. Here he *would* have no Sabbath, there he *shall* have no Sabbath,—no rest, no light, no happiness,—nothing but *unrest, disquiet, misery*,—“the blackness of darkness for ever.” “The wicked are like the troubled sea when *it cannot rest.*”

Reader, hearken and receive the consolation wherewith we are comforted of God: “Come unto me,” says the compassionate Saviour, “all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you *rest.*” “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find *rest unto your souls.*” This is the first step—the prelude to all that follows. Rest to the soul—rest in Christ; and then succeeds—oh, rapture beyond expression! oh, bliss without alloy!—“THE REST THAT REMAINETH FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD!”

“Oh, blessed rest! when we rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!—when we shall rest from sin, but not from worship; from suffering and sorrow, but not from joy! Oh, blessed day! when I shall rest with God—when I shall rest

in knowing, loving, rejoicing, and praising!—
 when my perfect soul and body shall together perfectly enjoy the most perfect God—
 when God, who is love itself, shall perfectly love me, and rest in His love to me, and I shall rest in my love to Him—when He shall rejoice over *me* with joy, and joy over me with singing, and I shall rejoice in Him!”

“ Rest, rest from anxious thought,
 From pressing, hurrying care ;
 Rest here so vainly sought,
 So richly furnish'd *there*.
 O Saviour dear ! how sweet 'twill be
 To rest my weary head on Thee !

“ Peace, peace, a calm repose,
 No shadows hovering still
 Around, of coming woes,
 Peace shall each bosom fill.
 O Saviour dear ! how sweet 'twill be
 To be at peace, because with Thee !

“ Vigour and strength shall there
 In mind and spirit reign ;
 No conflict then shall wear
 Me with unceasing pain.
 O Saviour dear ! how sweet 'twill be
 With perfect powers to worship Thee !”

The Living Dead.

JOHN xi. 26, 27.

“Whosoever liveth, and believeth in ME, shall *never die*.
Believest thou this? She saith unto him, Yea, Lord :
I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which
should come into the world.”

1 COR. xv. 42, 43.

“It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption : it is
sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory.”

JOHN xiv. 19.

“Because I live, ye shall live also.”

Col. iii. 4.

“When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye
also appear with him in glory.”

2 COR. v. 1.

“For we know, that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle
were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house
not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

2 TIM. ii. 11, 12.

“It is a faithful saying : For if we be dead with him, we
shall also live with him : if we suffer, we shall also
reign with him : if we deny him, he also will deny
us.”

“ There is no death | what seems so is transition :
This life of mortal breath
Is but a suburb to the life elysian,
Whose portals we call death.

“ She is not dead,—the child of our affection,—
But gone into that school
Where she no longer needs our poor protection,
And Christ himself doth rule.

“ In that great cloister's stillness and seclusion,
By guardian angels led ;
Safe from temptation, safe from sins' pollution,
She lives, whom we call dead.

“ Day after day, we think what she is doing
In those bright realms of air ;
Year after year her tender steps pursuing,
Behold her grown more fair.

“ Thus do we walk with her, and keep unbroken
The bond which nature gives ;
Thinking that our remembrance, though unspoken,
May reach her where she lives.”

H. W. LONGFELLOW.

COL. iii, 3. 4.

“ For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.
When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall
ye also appear with him in glory.”



HE very slender hold which Christ has taken of our life is nowhere shewn so much as in the wantonness of our grief at the death of our loved ones. Why should they not die? Were they given to us that we might sequester them? Does no one else love our children but ourselves? Are we to employ our love as chains and bonds, that we may bind them for ever to the earth? Shall we girdle them with our selfishness? Were they sent into life as into a campaign? and shall we mourn that the battle is quickly fought, so that it be victorious? Were they sent into life scholars and apprentices? and shall we mourn that their apprenticeship is soon ended, and their indentures broken; and they are so soon graduated, and their diplomas awarded? I have never seen any man

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hanging crape upon trees because the blossoms had fallen, that the fruit might swell ; but I see people putting crape upon their doors, and upon their persons, because summer has come sooner to their children and their companions than they thought. The advance of summer is not terrible to the natural world ; why should the advance of heaven be terrible ? What is dying but blossoming ? All the winter long the blossom-bud was hidden in the tree. The spring brings it forth. And while we live in this world our real life and beauty are hid. While living we are buds which, from the chilliness of the air, cannot open.

When men have lived long, and outlived strength and activity, we do not marvel that they die ; but we think that early dying is mysterious. That God might *enwreath the year*, and leave not *one* moment without a blossom, He hath appointed flowers for *every* period. Some things are made to blossom in earliest spring, some in latest ; some in early summer, some in midsummer. Multitudes are appointed for the autumn, and some God sets to put wreaths on the very brow of winter. In like manner, there are different

periods of blossoming out of life. We do not know what is the secret work that goes on within. Nowhere else is our ignorance of the spiritual realm, and of the relation of our inward life to it more apparent, than in judging of men's fitness to live or die. The conditions of life hereafter rule mightily ; and many that to us would seem ripe and ready to go are kept back, while many that seem to us unfinished and unfit for spiritual perfection are transplanted.

But the relations of each particular nature to the future state ; their susceptibility to the influences that then shall surround them ; their aptitudes to moral goodness and harmony ; their power of assimilation ; their impressibleness under other circumstances, we do not know, and do not even suspect. And to judge of these things by any earthly tests or rules of experience is most surely gross and blundering folly. Often babes and sucklings have more true symmetry of spirit in them than old men. Many seem less fit to die the further they are removed from childhood. The very data upon which judgments are formed in these matters are not within our reach. We have not the elements even

for a calculation. In respect to our earthly relations, observations and experience may make us wise ; but our relations to the invisible and the future must always be tenuous, mysterious, hidden.

We blame no one that for his *own* sake he keenly feels the pangs of separation ; but we do wonder that there is no more generosity in the love which we bear to our dear ones, and that the full and glorious certainties which illumine their condition when they have passed beyond us, do not cast back some light of joy upon our grief ! We mourn as those that have no hope, whereas our mightiest griefs should be imbosomed in hope and joy. What copious tears were shed because *God will bring up our babes for us !* With what frantic sorrow do we beat ourselves because our heart companions are suddenly translated into all honour, and nobleness, and purity, and ecstasy of joy ! When the golden gate is opened, and our loved ones pass through, we may be sad that we are left in the drear wilderness, but not that *they* have entered the city of their coronation ! We may mourn that we are alive, but not that they are dead. *Living is death ;*

dying is life. THE DEAD ARE THE LIVING. We are not what we appear to be. On this side of the grave we are exiles, on that citizens; on this side orphans, on that children; on this side disguised and unknown, on that disclosed and proclaimed as the sons of God!

If we could but break down by our faith and imagination the barrier which our senses interpose; if we could but walk the garden road, and move through the celestial air, beholding the fulfilment of the earthly promise; if we could but assure ourselves of the lustrous beauty, the glorious largeness and liberty, the wonderful purity and joy of those whom God hath called and crowned with immortality, unless we were petrified with selfishness, we should lay aside our sorrow, and break forth with thanksgiving. Since only days and weeks are between us and those who have gone before; since joy and sorrow alike, and the whole course of earthly experiences are bearing us straight onward to the same abode, it would seem the very wantonness of unregulated grief, the very fantasy of earthly folly, not to find consolation and patience, yea, and a sobered glad-

ness, that we are known in heaven by our forerunners. Children are the hands by which we take hold of heaven. By these tendrils we clasp it and climb thitherward. And why do we think that we are separated from them. We never half knew them. Until they die, men are not in a condition to be known. That which belongs to men does not come to them in this world. We are kept from each other while yet we live together in life.

We are all of us travelling, then, to the land of acquaintanceship. We are not unpopulating our houses ; we are not sending our friends from us, nor our children away from home. We are all travelling to that realm where we shall know even as also we are known. We move faster as every cord is loosed that bound us to earth—faster as every heart that we loved draws upward. Let us rejoice. And, as in autumn, the very earth prepares for death as if it were its bridal, and all the sober colours of the summer take higher hues, and trees and shrubs and vines go forth to their rest wearing their most gorgeous apparel, as ending their career more brightly than they began it ; so let our

spirits cast off sombre thoughts and sable melancholy, and clothe themselves with all the radiancy of faith ; with every hue of heavenly joy. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord."

"Holy Father, take me into deathless union with Thyself ; grant me the fellowship of Thy Spirit ; quicken my soul into a more divine and glorious life, and perfect in me Thy most blessed will."

"Thy stroke, O death,—terror of the world,—I hañ :
 'Twill snap the fetters of my captive soul,
 And set me free—free to wing the vasty realms of bliss,
 Inbreathe the freest air of life divine,
 And bask me in the sunshine of eternal love."

"As through the gloomy valley
 The Christian takes his way,
 With pallid brow and closing eye,
 He bids farewell to day.
 That valley is not dark to him ;
 An orb of holy light
 Glances upon the passing soul,
 And dissipates the night.

"From Christ a stream of glory shines ;
 But death, who dwelleth there,
 Would intercept those blissful beams,
 To fill the saint with fear.
 Cold shade ! in vain the spectral gloom :
 The day-spring from on high
 Lights up the glowing scene beyond
 With immortality.

"The saint beneath the ghastly shade
 Passes in mortal strife ;
 But then mortality is lost
 In everlasting life.
 'Tis but the *shade of death* he meets ;
 Hear his victorious cry,—
 'Where is thy sting, O threatening death ?
 O grave, thy victory?'"

Mrs MORRISON, Cheshunt

"Have you heard the tale of the Aloe plant,
 Away in the sunny clime ?
 By humble growth of an hundred years
 It reaches its blooming time ;
 And then a wondrous bud at its crown
 Breaks out into thousand flowers.
 This floral queen, in its blooming seen,
 Is the pride of the tropical bowers ;
 But the plant to the flower is a sacrifice,
 For it blooms but once, and in blooming dies.

"Have you further heard of this Aloe plant,
 That grows in the sunny clime,
 How every one of its thousand flowers,
 As they drop in the blooming time,
 Is an infant plant that fastens its roots
 In the place where it falls on the ground ;
 And fast as they drop from the dying stem,
 Grow lively and lovely around ?
 By dying it liveth a thousandfold,
 In the young that spring from the death of the old."

HENRY HARBAUGH.

FOR A SICK-ROOM.

'Tis not a lonely night watch
Which by thy couch I spend ;
Jesus is close beside us,
Our Saviour and our Friend.

Often I strive all vainly
To ease thine aching head,
Then, silently and gently,
Himself he makes thy bed.

Do we not hear Him saying,
"Your guilt on me was laid ;
Ye are my blood-bought jewels ;
Fear not, be not dismay'd :

"I sit beside the furnace,
The gold will soon be pure ;
And blessed are those servants
Who to the end endure."

Amen. O blessed Saviour ;
Dwell with us, in us here,
Until we share Thy glory,
When God shall wipe each tear.

COME, LORD JESUS, COME QUICKLY."

- "Come, Lord, and tarry not ;
Bring the long-looked-for day ;
Oh, why these years of waiting here,
These ages of delay ?
- "Come, for Thy saints still wait ;
Daily ascends their sigh :
The Spirit and the Bride say, Come,—
Dost Thou not hear the cry ?
- "Come, for Thy Israel pines,
An exile from Thy fold ;
Oh, call to mind Thy faithful word,
And bless them as of old.
- "Come, for the corn is ripe ;
Put in Thy sickle now ;
Reap the great harvest of the earth,
Sower and Reaper Thou !
- "Come, in Thy glorious might—
Come, with the iron rod,
Scattering Thy foes before Thy face,
Most mighty Son of God.
- "Come, and make all things new,
Build up this ruin'd earth ;
Restore our faded Paradise,
Creation's second birth.
- "Come, and begin Thy reign
Of everlasting peace ;
Come, take the kingdom to Thyself,
Great King of righteousness."

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