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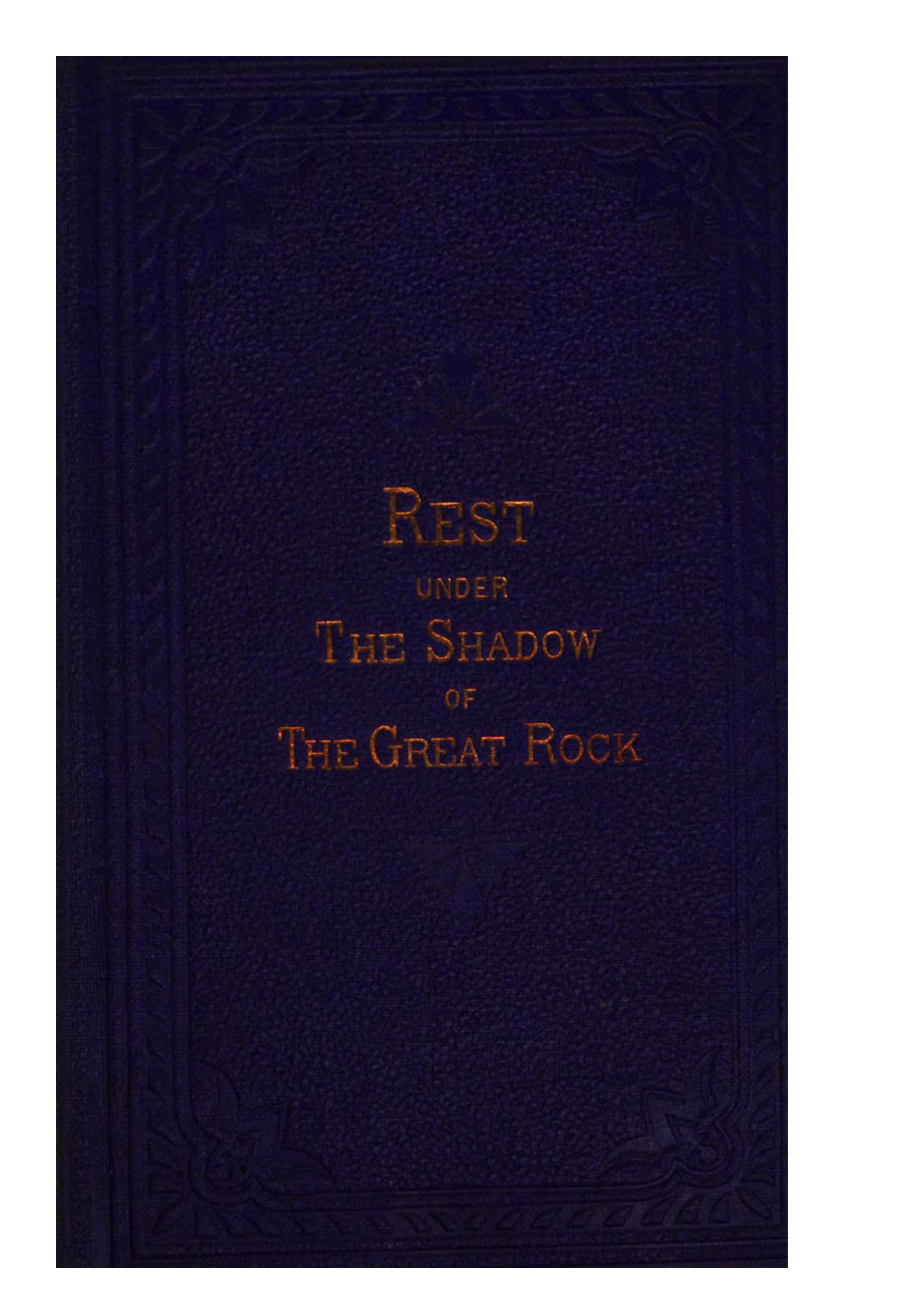
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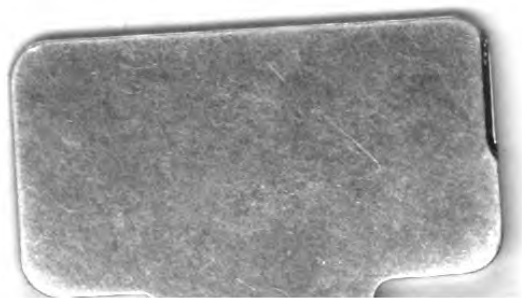
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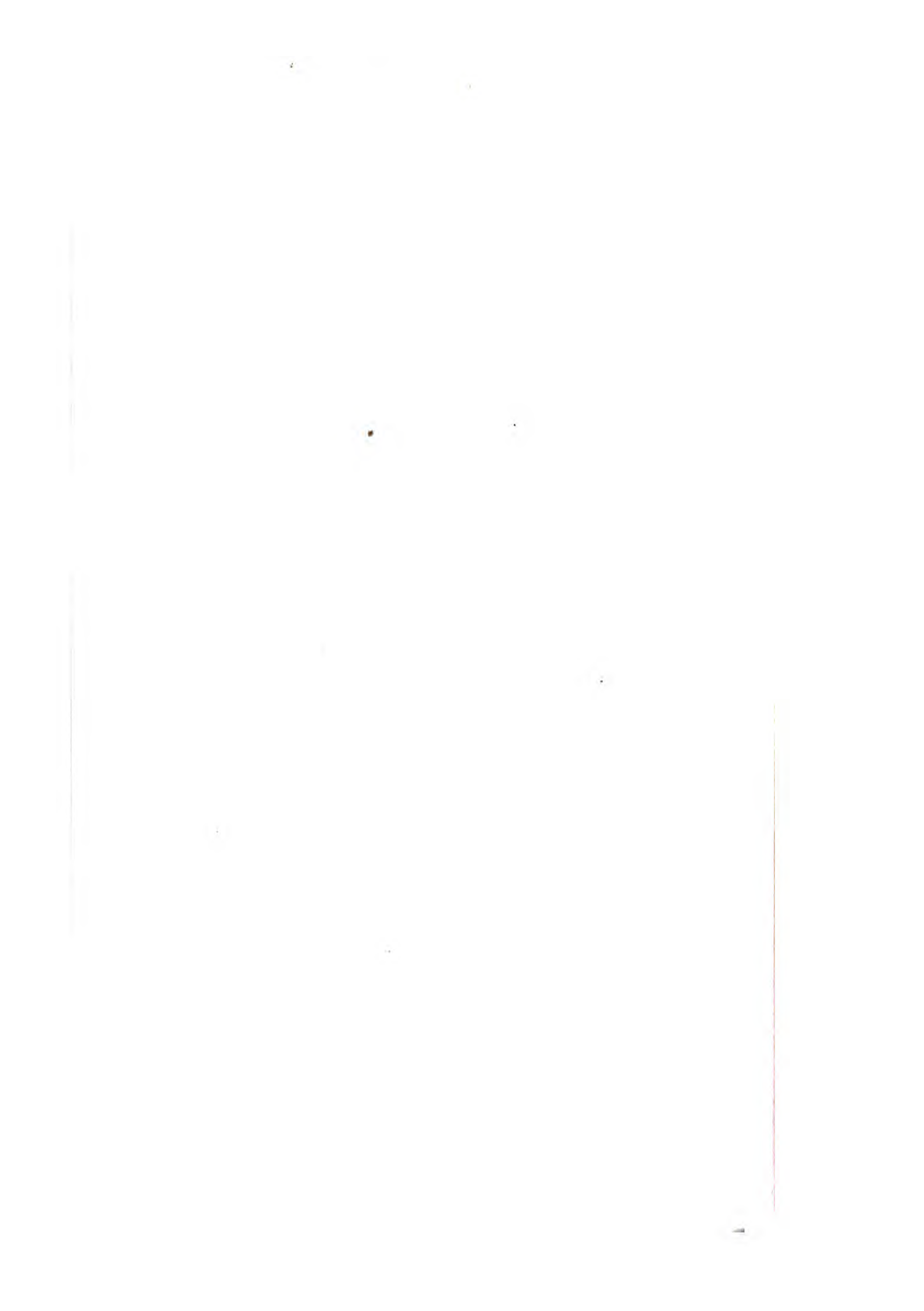


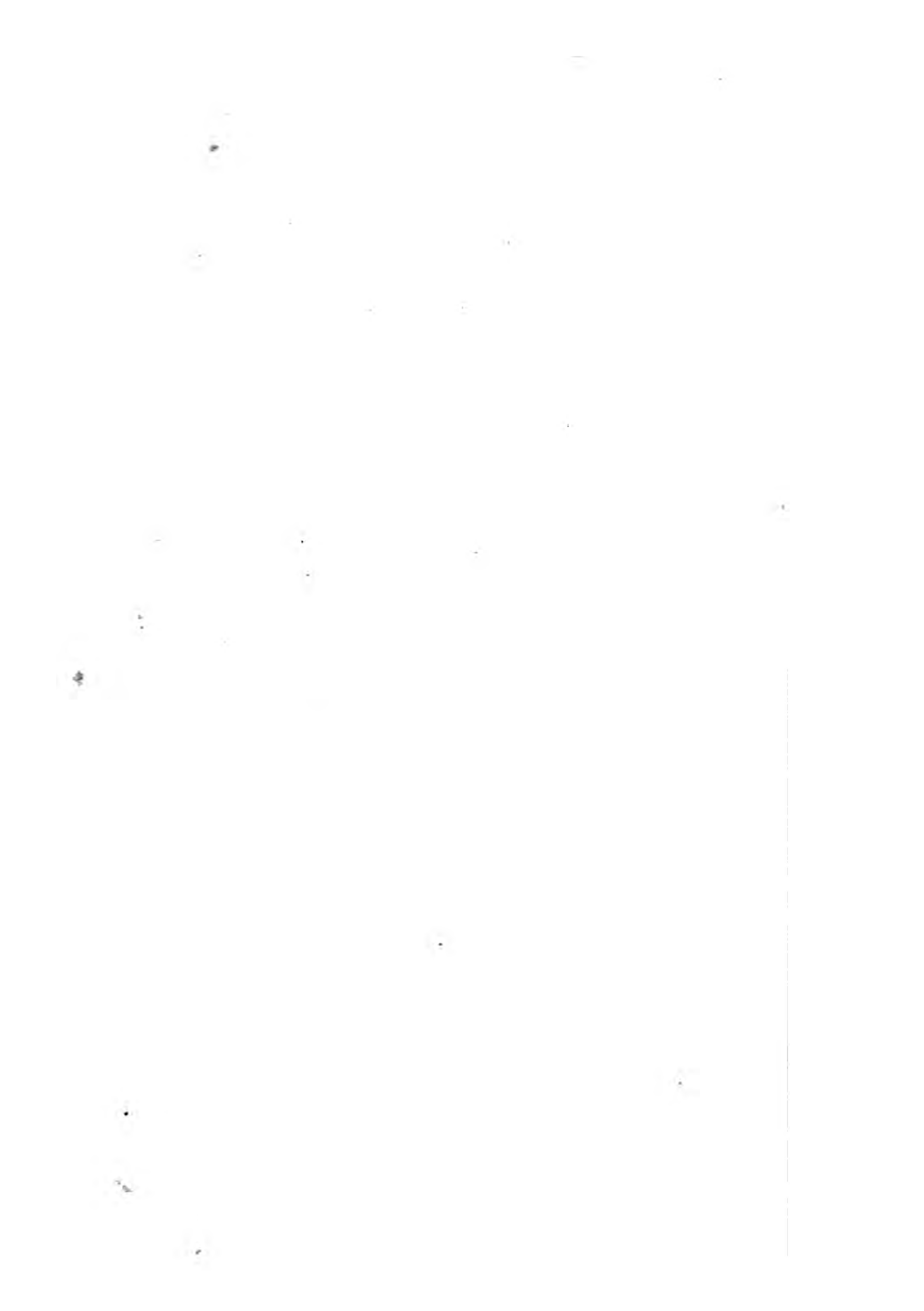
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REST
UNDER
THE SHADOW
OF
THE GREAT ROCK



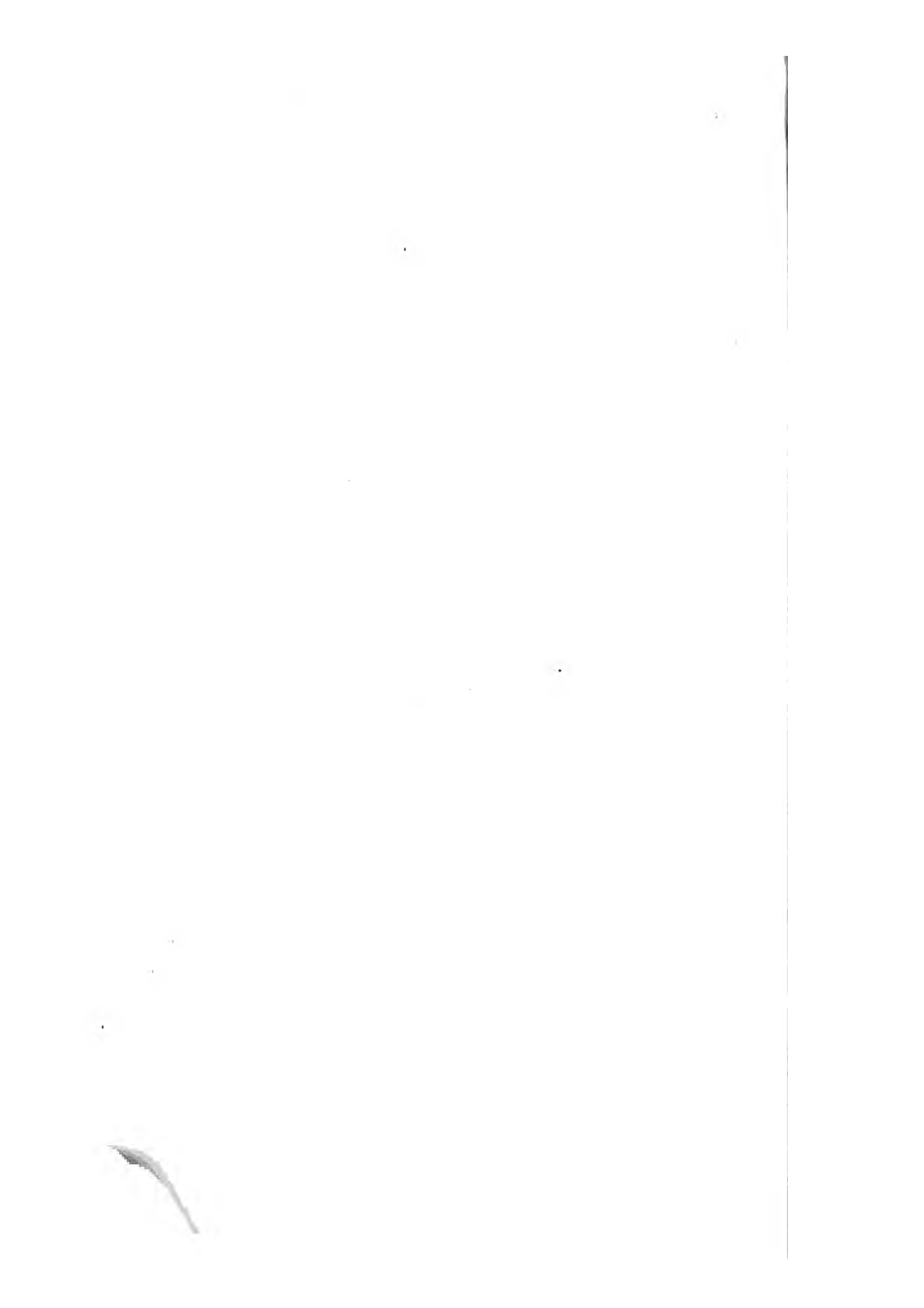




R E S T

UNDER

THE SHADOW OF THE GREAT ROCK.



REST

UNDER

THE SHADOW OF THE GREAT ROCK.

A Book of Facts and Principles.

BY THE

REV. JOHN KENNEDY, M.A.,

F.R.G.S.

“Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in Thee.”—AUGUSTINE.

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PREFACE.

TRAVELLERS tell us of wells in eastern lands of which patriarchs and their flocks drank in the olden times. Millenniums have gone and these wells are as full and refreshing as ever. Mountain and plain around have passed from the hands of one conqueror to those of another; adjacent fields and valleys have been now trampled underfoot and desolated by ruthless invaders, and now restored and raised to a high condition of fertility and wealth by industry and labour. But amid every change, and unwitting of the men that have possessed them, these wells have ever poured forth their exhaustless treasures. Such a fountain, perennial and exhaustless, has the Divine word opened for weary souls in its revelation of the character, providence, and redeeming grace of our God and Father. And those who drink of this fountain, out of weakness are made strong to bear the heat and burden of life's saddest day.

The Bible, the Sufferer's true Text Book and Manual, is full of the cries of human hearts broken with their own sins and with the world's woes, and makes known to us how those cries were hushed and those hearts healed. From its first page to its last it bears testimony to an invisible world, a personal living God, our relations to the great Father of all, our immortality, and the grace of redemption beginning its work amid the sins of earth, and perfecting it in the incorruption of heaven. This it does by a record of facts in which God was pleased to reveal himself in ages that are past, and by which he continues to speak to all ages of Himself, his ways, and his will.

The object of the book which is now put into the reader's hands is to direct the steps of men—not of mourners alone, but of all men—to the fountain of Divine consolation, thus opened, and to persuade them to “draw” of its “living water” “in all time of their wealth,” as well as “in all time of their tribulation” and “in the hour of death.” Brief meditations on texts and promises of Holy Scripture are useful, very useful, especially in the sick chamber. But the object of this volume is not merely to serve the purpose which these serve,

but so to instruct men in the knowledge of God's providence and grace, that when affliction comes, they shall not "think it strange" but welcome it, or at the least bear it, as their Father's will, and as the means for promoting their souls' health. May God prosper it in its mission of mercy.

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“What are the consolations of men—*of all, at least, but pious men!* For in these consolations may be discerned the depth of their misery. . . . They are told when they are miserable, that some one is still more miserable; or they are informed by their friends, Job's comforters, that all their misery has been brought on them by their own doings, which is like thrusting thorns into sores by way of healing; or that it does not matter much what happens in a world which is so confused, where life is brief, where nothing is certain for a day or even for an hour, and where no lot is to be envied, because of the secret griefs and terrors which beset even the most felicitous of men.”—“FRIENDS IN COUNCIL.”

“They have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their resting-place.”—JER. 1. 6.

“Come unto me, and I will give you rest.”—OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

“ He that hath made his refuge God,
Shall find a most secure abode ;
Shall walk all day beneath his shade,
And there at night shall rest his head.

“ Then will I say, My God, thy power
Shall be my fortress and my tower :
I that am formed of feeble dust,
Make thine almighty arm my trust.

“ If burning beams of noon conspire
To dart a pestilential fire,
God is our life ; his wings are spread
To shield us with a healthful shade.

“ If vapours, with malignant breath,
Rise thick, and scatter midnight death,
Israel is safe ; the poisoned air
Grows pure, if Israel's God be there.

“ What though a thousand at thy side,
At thy right hand, ten thousand died ?
Thy God his chosen people saves
Amongst the dead, amidst the graves.

“ But if the fire, or plague, or sword,
Receive commission from the Lord
To strike his saints among the rest,
Their very pains and deaths are blest.

“ The sword, the pestilence, or fire,
Shall but fulfil their best desire ;
From sins and sorrows set them free,
And bring thy children, Lord, to thee.”

PSALM XCI. by WATTS.

THE GREAT ROCK:

NO REST BUT UNDER ITS SHADOW.

“If man is not made for God,” said Blaise Pascal, “why is it that he is not happy but in God? And if man is made for God, why is he so contrary to God?”

These contradictions in man's nature and character are capable of a sad explanation. That man is not happy but in God is certain, being demonstrated by the experience of sixty centuries. And this points very plainly to the conclusion that he was made for God. Even as the eye was made for light and the ear for sound, so the soul was made for God, made to be his temple, to reciprocate his love, and to enjoy his favour. Never was there a state of mind more rational, more remote from enthusiasm, than the Psalmist's when he said, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.” “My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.” And never was action more rational or less romantic—not the coldest and most selfish bargain that has ever been made on 'change—than were the deeds of those confessors in many ages who submitted to exile and even death for God's sake and his gospel's. They were made for God.

They knew it. They felt it. And they must realize the end for which they were made. To come short of it would have been worse than death.

But then if a man is made for God, why is he so contrary to God? That he is contrary to God is an indubitable fact. In Bible language, "The carnal mind is enmity against God." The heart of man is strangely averse from, and opposed to, the great Father. Even while penetrated with the consciousness that he has been made for God, and that none but God can be his portion, he turns away from God and follows after lying vanities. You find him sometimes fleeing from his Maker's presence if, perchance, he may hide himself in darkness, and sometimes boldly defying and blaspheming him to his face. Sometimes he tries, one would almost say, to court and bribe his Maker by rites and ceremonies, and sometimes ostentatiously tramples every law of God beneath his feet; both in the one case and in the other proving himself to be contrary to God: made for God, and yet contrary to him. But the mystery is not inexplicable. Let the eye be diseased, and light, the very thing for which it was made, will be its greatest torture. Let the ear be diseased, and sound, for which it was made, will be its torture. In both cases, the human organ is rendered by disease contrary to that for which it was made.

Even so is it with the human soul. It is morally diseased; and it is this, and this alone, that makes it contrary to its God and Father. In short, the key to the mystery is sin. It is sin that has set man at variance with his Maker. It is sin that has made

the heart of man the seat of so strange a contradiction, that while it feels the necessity of God to its happiness, it puts forth its very hardest effort to keep God out.

There is one similitude under which God is revealed to us, which is suggestive at once of our human necessities and sorrows, and of the condescension with which he becomes to us all that we need. In nearly forty passages of Scripture, God is spoken of as a Rock. In one composition, the song which Moses put into the hands of the people when they were approaching the promised land, we find this figure used five times, and, in connection with it, a comprehensive description of the Divine character. "Ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he." David asks with holy exultation, "Who is God save the Lord? or who is a rock save our God?" "He only is my Rock and my salvation," was the common language of those godly hearts whose breathings we have in the Old Testament. Referring to the objects of worship in which the heathen trusted, they could say, "Their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges." "There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God." And in their own Rock they gloried. "The Lord liveth; and blessed be my Rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted." "O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful

noise to the Rock of our salvation." And when sunk in sorrow or compassed with difficulty, it was to this Rock their eyes turned. "From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed : lead me to the Rock that is higher than I." "Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be thou my strong Rock, for an house of defence to save me."*

The most prominent, although not the only idea associated with this Divine title in these scriptures, is that of defence and safety. Israel was taught to trust in God even as men who are pursued by an enemy in times of war and violence trust in "the munitions of rocks." And the loftiest rocks, which no pursuer could scale and no weapon overturn, were but imperfect signs of the refuge which God's servants found in his faithful and unchanging love.

In one passage we have other ideas more distinctly connected with this sacred title, a passage in which the revelations of the Old and of the New Testament may be said to meet together: "A man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."† It will be observed that here what in the Scriptures already quoted is ascribed to Jehovah, and claimed for him as his peculiar work and gift, is ascribed to "a man," and that in a book which says, "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?" ‡ "Thus saith the Lord," we read

* Deut. xxxii. 4; Ps. xviii. 31; Ps. lxii. 2; Deut. xxxii. 31; 1 Sam. ii. 2; Ps. xviii. 46; Ps. xcvi. 1; Ps. lxi. 2; Ps. xxxi. 2.

† Isa. xxxii. 2.

‡ Isa. ii. 22.

in another prophet; "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." * Trust in man, says Jeremiah, in effect, and you shall be like the heath in the desert, like them that inhabit the parched places in the wilderness. How then can Isaiah say of "a man," that he shall be to those who trust in him as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land? Who is this "man" of whom he speaks?

Let the prophet himself answer. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." † Of such a man it may well be said, as it is of the Son of God in the second Psalm, "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." Nor would Jeremiah say that they who trust in *this* man shall be like the heath in the desert.

The highest prerogatives claimed for Jehovah in the Old Testament are claimed for Jesus in the New.

* Jer. xvii. 5-8.

† Isa. ix. 6.

“The God of the first chapter of Genesis is the babe Immanuel of the first chapter of Matthew. He whom Isaiah depicts as the Lord God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, is the Christ crucified of evangelical story and apostolic preaching. He who, in the pages of Jeremiah, is the true God, the living God, and an everlasting King, is, in the pages of John, the Word made flesh, the weeping Jesus, the Master girded with a towel and washing his disciples’ feet, the sufferer crowned with thorns and nailed in humiliation to the cross.” This view of the Divine dignity and power of “the man Christ Jesus” explains and justifies the language of Isaiah, “A man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.”

The winds and tempests with which the prophet was familiar, and which he used as figures of the dangers and afflictions from which the Saviour Christ Jesus is the only sufficient hiding-place, were many of them fierce and destructive. Of the sirocco a recent traveller says, “Who can abide it? The air becomes loaded with a fine dust, which it whirls in rainless clouds hither and thither at its own wild will: it rushes down every gorge, bowing and breaking the trees and tearing away every leaf. The eyes inflame, the lips blister, the moisture of the body evaporates; and under the ceaseless application of the wind you become languid, nervous, irritable,

despairing.” Of another form of the sirocco, quiet and windless, he says, “I encountered one on my way from Lydd to Jerusalem. Pale lightnings played through the air like forked tongues of burnished steel, but there was no thunder and no wind. The heat, however, became intolerable, and I escaped from the burning highway into a dark vaulted room at the lower Beth-horon. I then fully understood what Isaiah meant when he said, ‘Thou shalt bring down the noise of the strangers as the heat in a dry place, as the heat with the shadow of a cloud;’ that is, as such heat brings down the noise, and makes the earth quiet.” “There is no living thing abroad to make a noise,” he continues. “The birds hide in thickest shades; the fowls pant under the walls with open mouth and drooping wings; the flocks and herds take shelter in caves and under great rocks; the labourers retire from the fields and close the doors and windows of their houses; and travellers hasten, as I did, to take shelter in the first cool place they can find.”*

The storm which was foreboded by the little cloud seen by Elijah’s servant rising out of the sea, was of a kind whose suddenness and severity are well known to those who navigate the sea on which he was looking down from Mount Carmel. “We saw a little black cloud,” writes a voyager in the Levant, “on the verge of the horizon towards the south, which was every instant spreading over the sky and drawing nearer to us. The captain altered his course instantly. But scarcely an instant

* “The Land and the Book,” by Dr. Thomson.

had elapsed ere the squall was upon us, and all grew black around: the wind came rushing and crisping over the water, and in a moment the ship was running almost gunwale down, whilst the rain was dashing in torrents on the decks. And as the gust rushed through the rigging, the sheets and ropes were cracking and snapping with a fearful noise."

Referring to a land-storm well known in Palestine, our Lord said, "Every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."

Of the dry places of which the prophet speaks every reader of the Bible can form some idea, some idea at least of the suffering which is caused by the want of water. Writing of Hagar and Ishmael on their way through the wilderness, when "the water was spent in the bottle," Dr. Kitto says, "The exhaustion of a supply of water in the burning and inhospitable desert, without the prospect of a fresh supply, is a situation of such utter misery and danger as cannot well be imagined by those who have not themselves been exposed to something of the kind." "When the water in the water-skins is spent, the merchant whose camels are laden with the rich products of India becomes at once a beggar. In that agony of suffering which extreme thirst in the hot unsheltered desert excites, such a man would cheerfully give all his camels, and all the wealth with which they are laden, for the

mouthful of water which has been preserved in a water-bag by some poor creature, who is now the only object of his envy. But the latter scorns the paltry bribe, knowing that precious drop to be his only hold upon existence."

"Next to water," says Dr. Kitto, speaking of his own travels, "the greatest and deepest enjoyment we could ever realize in the hot climate of the East was when, on a journey, any circumstances of the road brought us for a few minutes under some shade. Its reviving influence upon the body's frame, and consequently upon the spirits, is inconceivable by one who has not had some experience of the kind." Often, he tells us, during the halt of a caravan in the open air, where he was able to secure a station for repose under the shelter of a rock or an old wall, did his exultation and strong sense of luxurious enjoyment remind him of those passages of Scripture in which shade is mentioned as a thing panted for, with a great desire, as one of the chief blessings of our mortal state.

In the figures with which prophets thus set forth the sad realities of human life there is no exaggeration. Nor happily is there in the figures with which they set forth the blessings which both sinners and sufferers find in Christ. He is in very deed as a hiding-place from the wind and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. No figure nor combination of figures can adequately set forth what Christ is to those who trust in him. In a

natural desert, it is impossible to *travel* under the shadow of a rock. The travelling must be pursued under the burning sun, and with the constant risk of encountering the sirocco and other dangers. It is only occasionally that the traveller comes to the great rock and enjoys rest under its shadow. When most he needs protection and repose, he may be unable to find it, and then nothing remains for him but to lie down and perish. But not so with Him of whom the great rock is but a figure. He is ever near, ever accessible. "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth." "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." "From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the Rock that is higher than I. For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy. I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever: I will trust in the covert of thy wings." "If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." *

This constant nearness of our God and Saviour is essential to our safety and peace. In vain you tell us of a hiding-place such as we need, if, when our need is urgent, it be far away. The storms of life are often sudden and come when they are least expected, and to be safe we must never be far from our hiding-place. Let us be dying of a malady which proves itself too strong for any remedy that is known in England, and in vain you tell us of a physician in

* Ps. cxlv. 18; xlii. 1; lxi. 2-4; cxxxix. 9, 10.

India who possesses the means of cure. If weary of self, and the world, and sorrow, and sin, of what use is it to be told of a philosopher, who has chosen his abode in some distant Arabian solitude, who knows the secret of happiness and of spiritual life? The gospel does not mock our wants after this fashion. He who was born Immanuel, and who dwelt for a season among men in human form, said, when on the eve of going to dwell in the unseen whence he had come, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." So that though we see him not, yet, believing in him, we may rejoice, with a joy unspeakable, that he is ever near and ever accessible. He is as near to us in our times of imminent danger as he was to Peter when, beginning to sink, he cried, "Lord, save me, or I perish." He is as near as when the blind man found him passing by, and exclaimed, "Son of David, have mercy on me;" as near as when the woman that was a sinner found him in the Pharisee's house, and, not fearing the Pharisee's scorn, went to him and bathed his feet with her tears, and received from him the remission of her sins; as near as when he passed over the borders of the Holy Land and entered the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, and honoured the entreaties of an afflicted mother on behalf of her daughter, saying, "I have not found so great faith; no, not in Israel." Or, reverting to an Old Testament manifestation of his grace and power, he is as near to us as he was to the three faithful Israelites who would not bow down to the golden image. "Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" said the King of Babylon.

“Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.”

When Lazarus fell sick Jesus was not at Bethany; and when the sisters sent to inform him of their trouble he remained two days still where he was. But the distance was no obstacle to the exercise of his healing power if he had chosen to put it forth; and if he did not choose to put it forth it was from no indifference to the life of Lazarus or to the tears of Martha and Mary. It was that the glory of God might be more illustriously displayed than it could have been by an immediate staying of the progress of the sick man's disease. The distance between heaven and earth, whatever it be, is no obstacle to Christ's power to deliver and help and strengthen those who put their trust in him. Nor should any delay, or apparent delay, in the exercise of his power be regarded as a sign of indifference or forgetfulness. He is “with us always;” only it must be left to his wisdom to determine at what time and in what form he will deliver us. And if he is not pleased to remove our burden we may be sure he will enable us to bear it.

When the little bark which was conveying Christ and his disciples from the western to the eastern shore of the Lake of Gennesaret was overtaken by one of those sudden storms which prevail on that inland sea, he was “asleep on a pillow.” The winds raged, and the ship was covered with the waves, but the sleeper slept on as if unconscious of danger to himself or others. “Master, carest thou not that we perish?”

his disciples exclaimed when they awoke him. "Carest thou not?" were hard words, unworthy words, to come from the lips of men who had received such proofs of his love and power. They mistook that sleep of his. But he arose, and, in compassion to them, he rebuked the wind before he rebuked their unbelief. To the wind he said, "Peace, be still," and there was a great calm. To the disciples he said, "Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?" And they, being afraid, wondered, saying one to another, "What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him."

This wonder-creating deed was not only a miracle; it was a parable likewise. As a miracle it showed forth the Divine glory of Him who wrought it, and as a parable it teaches, to our great joy, that there is a *man* who is as a hiding-place from the winds and a covert from the tempests of life. That was a bold word which Jesus uttered when he stood up in the midst of the storm and said, "Peace, be still." The legend of Canute and his courtiers, whether true or false, instructs us what the fruit of that utterance would have been had he not been more than he seemed. "You are very mighty: you are lord of sea and land," said his courtiers to the Danish sovereign of England. "Then bring me a chair," said the king. And he sat down on the sea-shore. "Thou, O sea," he said, "art one of my subjects. Let not one of thy waves come any higher on the land, nor dare to wet thy sovereign's feet." The tide, unheeding the royal behest, moved onward and onward till it surrounded

Canute's chair. "Learn from this time," he said to his courtiers, "that it is sinful to lie and to flatter ; for only He who made the earth and the sea can make them obey him." Only He. And had Jesus been less, his word would have returned to him as empty of result as did the word of Canute.

But bold as was the command laid on the winds and waves of the Sea of Galilee, bolder still, although our imagination is less struck with it, was the word which he uttered when he said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." What manner of man is this, we involuntarily exclaim, that the very souls of men should find rest in him ! And they do. Christ has never been put to shame by the failure of his word. When others fail to cast the evil spirits of sin and unrest out of a man, Christ says with all boldness, "Bring him unto me." And, brought to Christ, the demoniac is soon found at rest, clothed, and in his right mind.

This Christ is our Hiding-place, our Covert, our great Rock. He is ever near. We need not say, "Who shall ascend into heaven, to bring him down from above?" for he is with us always. And in whatsoever part of the desert we may be journeying, and whatsoever the nature of the peril or sorrow that befalls us, we run unto him and are safe.

Our Rock, our Hiding-place, is not only ever near, but furnishes the very kind of protection and refreshment which our peculiar circumstances need. When the waters of the Flood prevailed, the ark was just such a refuge as Noah and his family needed. Pro-

tection from violence, deliverance from poverty, the cure of disease, precious as in other circumstances these blessings might be, would have at that time been of no avail; and to offer assistance in these forms, with the waters rising hourly higher and higher around them, would be to add mockery to their danger. When Israel, in flight from the house of bondage, was walled around by mountains which could not be climbed, by the pursuing chariots and horsemen of Egypt, and by the deep sea in front, the passage which Divine power opened through the sea was the very deliverance that was needed. Preach to the fugitive nation all the Divine truths which were involved in the history of their patriarchal ancestry; spread out before them and make their own both the treasures and the wisdom of the land they have left; give them a complete chart of the land which lies before their eyes on the other side of the sea, and of that other land which is afar off, and to attain which they have begun this journey—it will all avail them nothing. *They* are at hand who have said, “We will pursue, we will overtake, we will divide the spoil.” And nothing will avail the people of Israel now but that their pursuers be smitten behind them or a passage opened in the sea before them.

Even so with us. Our rock and hiding-place must be such as we need. And what first of all do our souls need? To begin at the very beginning, as sinners we are “condemned already.” And our first necessity is deliverance from condemnation, the forgiveness of our sins. Till we obtain this blessing all else will be in vain. Clothe the leper with purple,

and you do him no good. Put untold gold into the hands of the man who is to die on the scaffold tomorrow, you might as well fill his hands with clay. Our pride may resent these comparisons, and say, "We are neither lepers nor convicts;" but the truth is, we are both. And never was leper or convict in a more hopeless condition than that to which sin has reduced us. Unveil before us the glories of the Divine nature and character, give us ears to hear the songs of heaven, and you only aggravate our misery. Between God and us there is a great gulf. Tell us first how man can be just with God, how our sins can be pardoned, how we can be reconciled to the Father whom we have dishonoured and forsaken. Till this be accomplished, all the consolations which you can draw from God's book will only tantalize us; we feel that they are not, they cannot be, ours. They may float over our heads and before our eyes as shadowy clouds, but will not be substance and reality to our souls.

The questions which must thus be answered in order to our peace are answered in Holy Scripture. The Old Testament reveals God as a God that pardoneth iniquity, transgression, and sin. It assures us that there is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared. And it sets forth by types and shadows the "Sacrifice" by which sinners can enter into covenant with God and find peace. In the New Testament we have the way of pardon and life revealed so plainly that the wayfaring man may find it, and walk therein. Jesus Christ said, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by

me." "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." One of his apostles has said, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." To the same effect is the teaching of all the apostles. And their teaching is echoed by the very songs of heaven: "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."*

It is only incidentally that this topic belongs to the subject of the present volume, and for this reason we do not dwell on it now. But it cannot be too deeply impressed upon us, that no hiding-place can be such as we need if it do not afford us shelter from the condemning sentence of a broken law, and that till we find such shelter we are not in a position to receive and enjoy the consolations which are necessary to the suffering condition of our mortal state. Now Christ is just such a hiding-place. He has died for us, the Just for the unjust. And to them that believe in him

* John xiv. 6; iii. 16; Rom. iii. 23-26; v. 6-8; Rev. vii. 10.

there is no condemnation. They have passed from death unto life. Once estranged far from their Father in heaven, they are now brought nigh, restored to his family and favour, and become the heirs of great and precious promises, whose perfect fulfilment will be heaven itself.

How in other respects Christ is the Hiding-place, the Covert, and the Rock, that we need, future chapters of this volume will unfold. They that are in Christ have no promise of exemption from suffering. On the contrary, they are told that in the world they shall have tribulation. Life's sorrows will come upon them in all their variety and weight; personal, relative, and social; in body, in mind, and in estate. But the Christ to whom they belong, and under whose shadow they are sheltered, has both the arm of God and the heart of a brother. And, in times when they cannot trust a fellow-being, nor even an angel's care, he is with them, able and faithful to save.

Now, what would the reader think of a man traveling in the burning desert who should be too proud to acknowledge his need of shade, and refuse to place himself under the shadow of a great rock? Or what should we think of the man who, instead of seeking the shadow of the rock, should seek the shadow of a gourd like that of Jonah; a gourd whose frail and short-lived foliage is dried up and withered by the feeble worm or the scorching sunshine? Yet this is the very thing that multitudes do. They pass through life weary and heavy laden and shelterless, or they

betake themselves to refuges of their own contriving and building. And when the storm comes, then comes all the disappointment of the discovery that they had built upon the sand, and with it the peril of being overwhelmed and lost for ever.

But example will probably teach us all these things better than argument. The experience of Mrs. Schimmelpenninck will show how the most exquisite and ample supply of earthly good fails to satisfy the soul, and how spirits that are jaded and sickened by life's disappointments find rest under the shadow of the great Rock.

Mary Anne Galton, better known as Mrs. Schimmelpenninck, was born two-and-twenty years before the end of the last century, of parents who possessed all the advantages of wealth and refinement. Her early days were spent amid scenes her description of which is captivating and fascinating. She remembered to old age her mother's first speaking to her of God. Being told as a child that light comes from the sun, and water from the sea or clouds, she was led to inquire what the sun and the sea came from? Her mother told her to think for a day, and endeavour to find out. The endeavour was fruitless, and next morning the inquiry was renewed. Her mother took her into solitude, and solemnly told her that the answer she was about to give to her question was the most important thing she could ever hear in her life; that if she made a good use of it, she would have much happiness, and nothing

whatever could make her completely miserable; but if, on the contrary, she made a bad use of this knowledge, nothing could make her happy. Her mother then spoke to her of God; of his omnipotence, and of his omnipresence; of his great wisdom shown in all he had made; of his great love to all his creatures. She told her that God had given to every person a voice in the interior of their hearts, and that this voice was called conscience. She then said that God had invited all his creatures to speak to him and to tell him their wants, and that this was called prayer; and to thank him for all his goodness, and that this was called thanksgiving; and that we should never begin nor end the day without both the one and the other. From that time, on Sundays, she always taught her one of the commandments, a clause in the Lord's Prayer, or one of the texts from the Sermon on the Mount.

Mary Anne Galton thus received some religious instruction; but not only, valuable as it was in itself, did it come short of what we as sinners need especially to know, but its good effects were counteracted by teaching of a different kind. Her father and mother always desired her to bear pain like a philosopher or Stoic. They told her of the little Spartan boy who, having stolen a fox, let it gnaw him to the heart without his betraying pain, and asked her whether she would be able to do the same. One day, some cotton which was on her hand having caught fire, her mother bade her bring it slowly to her. She was at the opposite end of a long room, and was told to walk slowly lest the

flame should catch her dress; and not to mind the pain, but to be like the boys of Sparta. She did so, and the scar remained on her hand for many years.

Such training as this, one might suppose, would surely prepare her to endure hardness bravely and uncomplainingly. But Mary Galton's endeavours to be a Stoic were not founded on any love of philosophy, she tells us; but partly on an inordinate self-esteem, which made her like to see her doings in a grand point of view, and partly from the feeling of humiliation in seeing her own character poor and common-place and conquered by circumstances. And these are principles, if such they may be called, which could never make her morally strong and healthy. Of the peculiar doctrines of the gospel she heard nothing in childhood and early youth,—those doctrines which inspire the heart with filial love to God and with brotherly love to man. Her mother took the greatest pains that she might receive no contamination from ignoble minds, and she looked on the expression of human tenderness as weakness. But Mary's heart was fearful and sensitive, and in her isolation she wrapped herself up in her own feelings. She learned to despise the good opinion of others, and did not know at the time how much indifference to the world's judgment is mingled with a presumptuous self-reliance.

When suffering from spasmodic asthma her Stoicism utterly failed her. And, when writhing under pain and complaining bitterly, her mother taught her a lesson which, if she had been a child of God, or knew how to become one through

faith in Jesus Christ, might have proved very salutary and precious. Taking her on her lap, her mother said to her, "I will tell thee a story. There was once a slave called Æsop. His master, who was a Persian king, was very fond of him, and gave him every day all he could wish for; so that Æsop was obedient, and loved his master, and thanked him continually. A courtier to whom the king had praised Æsop for his obedience, answered, 'Well may he love thee, O King! for thou loadest him with all he can desire; but try him with some painful thing, and then thou wilt see what his love is worth.' Now, in the king's garden, there grew a nauseous and bitter melon, the stench of which was such that few could bear to approach it. The king told Æsop to go and cut one of the melons, and eat every bit of it. Æsop accordingly cut the fruit, the largest he could find, and ate it every bit. The wily courtier said to Æsop, 'How can you bear to swallow such a nauseous fruit?' He answered, 'My dear master has done nothing but load me with benefits every day of my life, and shall I not for his sake eat one bitter fruit without complaint, or asking the reason why?' My dear child," the mother continued, "God is our kind King, who surrounds us with every sort of benefit, and has done so ever since we were born. Hast thou, like Æsop, thanked him every day for his goodness? and art thou not willing to submit patiently to the first thing he has given thee which is really bitter?"

This was something better than Stoicism. It was

a lesson not of unfeelingness, but of submission; the lesson of Job's question, "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" and had it been associated with a true knowledge of God and faith in his mercy, it would have been most salutary. As it was, it bore some good fruit. Mary Galton came out of this affliction timid and nervous, and she found it her only comfort and support to look to God and to realize the sense of being under his care. Her mother's instructions impressed her deeply with a sense of duty to God, and also of his omnipresence and love. She taught her that the true object of life is to aim at being perfect even as God is perfect. But there her instructions left her. High-minded as she was, she knew nothing of faith in the atoning sacrifice, and believed that so long as people were sincere they were acceptable to God. She seemed to live in a charmed atmosphere, where every one paid her glad homage as to a superior being, and her lot was free from the rubs and collisions, the tug of war, of the battle-field of life. Mary needed a teaching which her mother could not give her.

The home of the Galtons was a favourite resort of many of the foremost men in science and philosophy in the end of the eighteenth century. But their conversations and discussions tended for the most part to undermine all religious principle and to destroy all practical faith in God. Mary came into occasional contact with members of the Society of Friends, who understood the gospel better than her parents did, and much did she long to enjoy the

peace which she saw them possessed of. At their meetings for worship she would watch the sunbeam streaming into the place of assembly, and illuminating the countenances of those on the benches before her, and often did she say to herself, "Oh that a ray of light from God like that sunbeam would come to me and teach me truly to know him!" But she had to pass through great darkness before this happy consummation arrived. She was led into a scorching desert, to humble her, to prove her, and to show her what was in her heart, before she discovered the great Rock under whose shadow she found rest and peace.

Mary Galton's misery must be described in her own words. After telling how art and literature opened their stores for her, and what a contrast she felt, though she did not well understand it, between the spirit of the heroic classics of Greece and Rome and the spirit of the Gospels, she says, "There was an internal voice which told me that all that glittered was not gold. The utterance of my sorrowful heart was often in some such words as these: 'Has God, if there be such a Being, sent man, wretched man, into the conflict of this miserable world without one ground of hope, one solid basis on which to plant his foot, one bright beam to cheer his desolate heart, or one guide to lead him through the labyrinth?' I turned from all my once fair hopes, as from the view of an illusive mirage of living water and bright habitable land, which only rendered the reality of the desert around me more full of anguish and terror.

“I had experienced in earlier childhood that it was a blessed thing even to seek the Lord in any degree. All around me I had once felt as a home prepared by him; and whilst I enjoyed the face of nature as his bounty, I indulged the hope that the crowning mercy of all, the knowledge of himself, might perhaps be some day vouchsafed to me. Therefore I took pleasure in the study and contemplation of his works, because I thought to see in them his character and his signature. I had also great delight in retiring into the solitude of my own heart, where I thought his voice was to be heard, that he might teach me himself.

“But now it was far otherwise. I dreaded solitude above all things. I hated to retire to the chamber of my heart, for God was not there. I became listless and indifferent, without hope. Hence ended all my study, all healthful exercise of mind, and thus was I a prey to hopeless despondency; and in maturer years I have never seen the worldly, the frivolous, and the dissipated, without heartfelt commiseration and compassion: for the heart of man abhors a vacuum; it must be tenanted by the presence of the holy God, or by that of the evil Spirit.”

Poor Mary Galton, with the little knowledge of Divine truth which she possessed undermined and unsettled, was like the miserable savages who, not having the bread-fruit or the corn to satisfy their hunger, are compelled to feed on clay. But her Stoicism utterly failed her now. When a child, she could repeat with enthusiasm the words of Zeno,

“Man tramples pain beneath his feet,” but forgot that the very man who uttered it hanged himself because he broke his finger. She would repeat in certain moods the classical adage,—

“*Ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes
Emollit mores nec sinit esse feros,*”

and forgot that Nero, the finest musician and architect of his age, was a monster, whose atrocities are still a prodigy to the world. The books she read in search of truth only added to her misery. Determined to remain in a state of uncertainty no longer, she betook herself to the earnest study of the evidences of Christianity; but the only books on the subject within her reach were those of her father's friend Dr. Priestley. “If he succeeded in proving Christianity to be true,” she says, “I was fully resolved to receive it; if false, to cast it off. Yet, in deep agony of heart, and under a strong desire to find it true, I read with riveted attention; and the books seemed to prove that Jesus of Nazareth had lived, and that he was a good man; but as I went on they declared him to be no more than a man.”

This was a bitter disappointment. A *mere* man could not be the great Rock, under whose shadow her soul was to rest. Though she had never received any accurate knowledge of Christian truth, yet she had had vague and glorious ideas concerning it. “I thought,” she says, “that Jesus Christ, though I never had distinctly contemplated him as Divine, was yet all-powerful, since he was declared to have made all things; also that he was omniscient, since he saw Nathanael under the fig-tree when afar off, and

constantly answered the thoughts rather than the words of those about him. I had also thought of him as speaking to every heart, and that none were left desolate who chose to turn to him; that death was a gain to all his children, as they would be with him for ever in a fulness of bliss."

If the teaching of the books she was now reading was true, Christianity, she found, was wholly unsuitable to her wants and powerless to assist and sustain. The temple was proved to be a Divine erection, but when she entered it she found nothing there worthy of trust and love. "I was isolated, and separated from God and man," she says. "I felt my heart full of conflicting evil passions, and my soul was prostrate in the midst of enemies stronger than myself. I needed a Saviour, who, to human sympathy, added Divine strength to bestow life as well as consolation. I was wholly perplexed amidst intricate doctrines, and teachings I was unable to unravel, and precepts I could not definitely understand. Vain was it to me to have revelation put into my hand, unless the Divine Author were himself here to explain it by the communication of his Holy Spirit of life, love, and knowledge. Oh, what a vivifying cordial would it have been had I then known assuredly that the Good Shepherd had given his life for his sheep!"

Her misery was now increased tenfold. She felt herself a stricken, desolate waif upon the stream of circumstances; and, hoping for no love from God or man, the dark and bitter waters of her unblessed heart overflowed on all around. The misery of living in a world of cruel oppressors, the horrible

fears and anticipations which haunted her, the bodily weakness which compelled her to spend her hours in intellectual exercises, "all seemed to render it impossible she could bear up longer." "Truly do I understand," she writes, "how, in the hour of calamity, those whose hearts are overwhelmed within them, and who know not God as a Father through his dear and only Son, are forced, as the only alternative, to seek distraction in dissipation and folly." Her heart was thus taught a deep lesson, that calamities can be received only in two ways. "Either the spirit must soar far above earthly mutabilities to heavenly peace, whilst the soul and body are thus strengthened to receive the chastening from a Father's hand; or else they must be met by stupifying the soul in indifference, hardening the heart in rebellion, or sharpening the spirit in acrimony against God and against man."

It was when on a visit to Bath, about the year 1800, that Mary Anne Galton found the shadow of the Rock, with all its blessed peace and safety. She was in bad health at the time, and her mind was still more afflicted than her body. One morning, while in low spirits, she declined to go into the pump-room, and asked leave to wait in a bookseller's shop till her mother's return. She went into an inner room, and sat down absorbed in her own reflections. She looked upon the multitude of books which lined the shelves, and questioned with herself if all the knowledge these books contained could help a soul in the wretchedness in which hers was; and then she dwelt on her own ignorance and unhappiness till she wept bitterly.

On looking up after awhile, she saw she was no longer alone. A young woman of pleasing mien was sitting opposite to her and looking earnestly at her. The stranger said in a sweet and gentle voice, "I am afraid you are much afflicted: is there anything I can do to assuage your grief?"

"Oh," Miss Galton replied, "can you do anything for a wounded spirit, which knows not where nor how to obtain peace?"

The lady paused for a moment, and then said, "There are many kinds of misery that try the hearts of men, but for them all there is one only remedy, the Lord Jesus Christ." And then she invited her to come to the Saviour who offered rest to the weary and heavy laden; and she added that although hers was a very occupied life, yet if this mourner would go and read the Scriptures with her she would gladly set aside an hour twice a week for the purpose.

This proposition threw Miss Galton into great perplexity, for she knew her family would not approve of it; and the entrance of a lady of her acquaintance put an end to the conversation. She afterwards found that the stranger who addressed her was a Miss Tucker, a "labouress" in the Moravian church, who was devoted to doing good, and a great blessing to many in Bath.

Under medical advice, it was resolved to leave Miss Galton for some time at Bath, and the medical attendant recommended a family he well knew as suitable to have charge of her in her parents' absence. What was her surprise when she recognised the first voice that welcomed her to her new home as the voice

of the lady who had accosted her in the bookseller's shop, the only voice which for many long years had been raised in kindness and care for her soul. Under this roof she remained for six months, and there she found rest to her soul under the shadow of the great Rock. Her Moravian friends read the Scriptures with her, and spoke much of the love of Christ. One day she said to them, "It surprises me very much that you should be so kind to me; for you cannot like me, I am so disagreeable."

They replied, "You mistake. It is not your being agreeable or disagreeable that we regard: we look upon you as a field our Lord has given us to cultivate, and we do not ask if there are few or many weeds; besides, when we were yet sinners Christ loved us."

"I had never before associated with professed believers," wrote Mrs. Schimmelpenninck in after-years, "and the impression produced by the first view of a Christian family was very striking to me. I was astonished to find that this little family, though at that time under heavy trial, lived in an atmosphere of love, peace, and cheerfulness, which could not but be felt. I perceived that they possessed a principle of happiness undiscovered by any person yet known to me. Whilst I gazed in wonder, and as our acquaintance ripened, they spoke continually of the love of Christ our Saviour in laying down his life for us sinners. And as I saw his power manifested in their lives, their words came with conviction to my heart. I felt touched to the quick that one so great, so holy, should vouchsafe to become the brother of so vile a creature as myself, and condescend to listen to the

outpoured detail of all my corruptions and follies, and win me by his Spirit with the same love with which he poured out his blood for me on the cross.”

Mary Anne Galton was now at rest in the hiding-place which Divine love has provided for guilty and weary souls. And there she abode all the days of her life. Much affliction and sorrow were her portion, but the joy of the Lord was her strength; and how in old age she still rested under the shadow of the great Rock will be told in another chapter.

We have read of a distinguished Frenchman of the seventeenth century who, having experienced severe afflictions and disappointments while yet ignorant of the only source of real consolation, sank into deep melancholy. On one of the brightest mornings in May, he was wandering in his usual disconsolate manner in the woods, and suddenly met an aged shepherd who was tending his flock, and who, though poor, had all the appearance of heartfelt and settled happiness. In the conversation which ensued between them, and in explanation of his own happiness, the shepherd is said to have spoken to this effect: “I look upon it that I do not depend upon circumstances, but on the great and good God who directs them. This is what makes me happy, happy at heart. God in mercy enables me to lie down and sleep secure on the immutable strength of that blessed word, ‘All things work together for good to them that love God.’ My reliance in my poverty is the love of God. If I were ever so rich I could not be more secure; for on what else but on his will can the

most flourishing prospects depend for their stability?" "Very few have your firmness of mind," said the rich but sorrowful man. "Sir," answered the shepherd, "you should rather say few seek their strength from God. I know misfortune as well as others; and I know, too, that where affliction comes close no firmness of mind will carry a man through. However strong a man may be, afflictions may yet be stronger, unless his strength be the strength of God. Again, sir, I say, it is not firmness of mind, but it is a firm and heartfelt conviction founded on Scripture and the experience of God's mercy in Christ. It is faith, and that faith itself is the gift of God."

"I see by your countenance," continued the shepherd, his heart being moved with compassion towards the man who did not possess the secret of happiness, "that, though so young, you have known sorrow. I could sincerely wish that you might had on mine, that, though at so advanced and infirm an age, I enjoy the blessings of peace. Yet though you are probably learned, whilst I am unlearned, I believe the secret of true happiness is the same to all. Let me then show my gratitude by telling you what the teaching of God, of his word and providence, has taught me. I was not always blessed with the happiness I now enjoy. When I was young, I had a farm of my own, I had a wife whom I dearly loved, and I was blessed with sweet children. Yet, with all these good things I was never happy; for I knew not God, the supreme good. My eyes being turned to the channel of temporal blessings instead of God their source, I was in constant anxiety, either to grasp more, or lest I

should lose what I had already got. God had compassion upon me, and sent misfortune to lead me to him. I once had a son, the pride of my heart; a daughter, and she began to be the friend and comfort of her mother. Each was grown up, and began to yield us comfort beyond our fondest hopes, when each we had to watch through a slow and lingering disease. Blessed be God, that taught them to live the life of his saints, and gives them now, as the angels in heaven, to behold his glory face to face. They were taught, but not of us; it was the work of God, and of that God whom as yet we knew not. Their deaths—but oh, how unspeakably bitter did that pang seem which came in mercy to call us to God and give us spiritual life! Till we fainted under the stroke, we did not remember that our insensible hearts had never yet been thankful for the blessing whose loss we were ready to repine at: we can now in mercy say that we know afflictions do not spring out of the dust. Blessed be God, I can now from my very heart thank him for uniting me for all the ages of a blissful eternity with those dear and angelic spirits towards whom I thought only of the short intercourse of time. Oh, how short my views, how long his love! Surely his mercy and the fruit of it endureth for ever. This was our greatest affliction: besides, I have, through a variety of events, lost my relations and my possessions, and I now, in my old age, serve in the house where I was once master. Yet I find that to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, is indeed life eternal. A man's life does not consist in the abun-

dance which he possesses, but in that peace which passes all understanding, and which the world can neither give nor take away. I desire to live by faith day by day, and trust to the Lord to provide for the morrow. In short, sir, I have found by experience, that every worldly good without God is empty, and that God without any worldly good is, as of old, all-sufficient."

"Under the shadow when noontide is shining ;
Under the shadow when day is declining :
Under the shadow when sorrow is pressing ;
Under the shadow when laden with blessing :

"Under the shadow when loneliness saddens ;
Under the shadow when company gladdens :
Under the shadow when joy has departed ;
Under the shadow when blithe and light-hearted :

"Under the shadow when sickness has bound us ;
Under the shadow when health is around us :
Under the shadow if smiling or sighing ;
Under the shadow if living or dying :

"Under thy shadow, O bountiful Father !
Under thy shadow thy weary ones gather ;
Under thy shadow harm comes to us never :
Under thy shadow may we be for ever !"

CHAPTER II.

THE GOD OF CONSOLATION :

MANIFESTED IN PARADISE, THE EXILE, AND THE SABBATH.

CONTENTS.—No rest but in God—Sun and shade in human life—Power of the Bible to comfort—The Bible in Madagascar—In an Indian jungle—“God is light”—“God is love”—Anecdote of two officers—The Fall—The primeval curse—Mercy even there—“Through night to day”—First Sabbath after the expulsion from Paradise—Rest still within reach—The Sabbath prophetic as well as commemorative—Verses by James Mackay, B.D.

“In this scene of ruin He presented himself, for the accomplishment of his design of love, immediately after the calamity which was the occasion of it had happened. . . . But it was necessary that a new modification of the circumstances of their abode and of their progress should be introduced. And whereas in their previous condition nothing was included which could in anywise disturb their peace, their serenity, and bliss, but all things, perfectly subordinate to their highest purposes, ministered to them only wisdom, and instruction, and delight; this, the state proper to pure and steadfast spirits who are prosperously advancing, in their original course, to the ends of their creation, had to be changed into a remedial condition which might purify and strengthen natures that had become depraved, while it also presented before them admonitory tokens of the perils of disconformity to the supreme injunction, and inflicted on them, moreover, a punishment proportional to their previous disregard.”—G. S. DREW.

“O world, so full of beauty!
O world, so full of woe!
The ruthless foot of evil
Hath crushed where'er we go.

“O world, so bright with roses!
O world, so sad with thorns!
Where the wild weed waves in rankness,
And the gentle flower adorns,—

“Sin, in her sable vestments,
Thy length and breadth hath trod,
To mar the perfect beauty
Of the glorious works of God.

“Her poison'd robe's dark fragments
O'er blossoms bright are flung;
In heaven's sweet breeze they flutter;
On bank and brier they're hung.

“The bending bough's green beauty
They blacken; and decay
Steals o'er the branch, and softly
The sad leaves drop away.

“Beside the broken lily
The withered roses lie.
Where are the flowers we fancied
Too beautiful to die?

“Oh for that land of promise,
Where forms of brilliant birth
Smile with a grace perennial,
Unknown on sinful earth;

“Where desolation breathes not,
Where never spoiler trod,
And sweet perfection blossoms
Beneath the eye of God!”

SUNDAY AT HOME.

THE GOD OF CONSOLATION :

MANIFESTED IN PARADISE, THE EXILE, AND THE SABBATH.

No rest but in God! If any conclusion may be drawn with certainty from the world's experience, this may. How much of sun and how much of shade should be put into the picture of human life, it is not easy to determine. When one man boasts that "the sours of life less offend his taste than its sweets delight it," another follows and remonstrates,

"Preach to the storm and reason with despair,
But tell not misery's son that life is fair."

And both may err, the one shutting his eyes to the evil that is in the world, the other to the good; the one with a light-hearted soul, sporting amid the pleasures of life; the other with a soured spirit, refusing to enjoy or even acknowledge the good which God bestows on him.

But the sad conclusion still remains: no rest in the world, no rest even in its prosperity and wealth. "Sire," said Massillon to Louis XIV., when called to preach before him at a time when the French monarch was at the summit of his power and glory, intoxicated with adulation and satiated with homage—"sire, if the world were here speaking to your majesty, it would not address you with, 'Blessed are

they that mourn.' 'Blessed,' it would say, 'the prince who never fought but to conquer; who has filled the universe with his name; who, in the course of a long and flourishing reign, has enjoyed with splendour all that men admire—the greatness of his conquests, the love of his people, the esteem of his enemies, the wisdom of his laws.' But, sire, Jesus Christ speaks not as the world speaks." "Great God!" exclaimed the preacher, "it is not that long train of unexampled prosperities with which thou hast favoured the glory of his reign that can render him the happiest of kings. . . . Whatever does not sanctify man can never make the happiness of man. Whatever does not place thee, O my God, in a heart, places there only vanities which leave it empty, or real evils which fill it with disquiet."

No rest, then, but in God! We return to this solemn fact, at once the teaching of the gospel and the experience of the world. And, happily, we are in possession of a book in which God has revealed himself as the God of peace and consolation, a book in which even isolated sayings and promises will be found, which have done more for the world's comfort than the most laboured arguments and treatises which the world's own wisdom has produced. Let us pause and meditate on this thought before we proceed to unfold the revelation which God has given of himself as the God of consolation in the history of his ways towards fallen man.

The power of single verses or passages of holy Scripture to give strength to the weak and comfort to

the sorrowful, may be compared to the effect which the African traveller, Mungo Park, describes as produced on his mind by the unexpected discovery of a single tuft of grass or moss. "Whatever way I turned," he says, "nothing appeared but danger and difficulty. I saw myself in the midst of a vast wilderness in the depth of the rainy season, naked and alone, surrounded by savage animals, and men still more savage. I was five hundred miles from the nearest European settlement. At this moment, painful as my reflections were, the extraordinary beauty of a small moss in fructification irresistibly caught my eye. I mention this to show from what trifling circumstances the mind will sometimes derive consolation; for though the whole plant was not larger than the top of one of my fingers, I could not contemplate the delicate conformation of its roots, leaves, and capsule, without admiration. Can that Being, thought I, who planted, watered, and brought to perfection, in this obscure part of the world, a thing which appears of so small importance, look with unconcern upon the situation and sufferings of creatures formed after his own image? Surely not. I started up, and disregarding both hunger and fatigue, travelled forward, assured that relief was at hand, and I was not disappointed."

Many a counterpart of the traveller's experience might be cited from the history of Christians when in danger and trial.

When what may well be called "the Reign of Terror" began in Madagascar, in 1835, when the heathen queen, Ranavalona, resolved to uproot the

gospel and drive it from her shores, the Christians were naturally filled with consternation and dread. Assembling where they could, at the midnight hours, during a long week of terrible suspense, they sought strength to enable them calmly to await the outburst of the lowering tempest. One of these gatherings, and how those who were met together were comforted, is thus described:—"It is night. A few women are gathered within that dwelling. Their countenances betoken an anxiety which too well agrees with their communications. They are conversing about the edict of the queen, and the punishments denounced against those who disregard it. Sad and disheartened, just as they are expressing to one another a fear lest their faith should fail in the hour of trial, an unexpected visitor enters. He is no stranger, but a Christian friend from a distant district; and soon it appears that he has come there with a message from God. Delighted to see him, and assured of his sympathy, the women disclose their depression and dread. 'Have you read God's word to-day?' he inquired. They told him that in consequence of the confusion they had been unable to do so. 'Have you, then,' he continued, 'wrestled with God in prayer?' They replied that they had tried to give themselves up to him, but that they had been overcome by terror. 'I wonder not at this,' said the friend; 'let us read the 46th Psalm.' With much feeling and solemnity he then proceeded: 'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear,' and so on. After this they knelt down together, this

Christian man conducting their devotions. The sacred exercise brought with it new life and strength. From that hour the trembling women became courageous; and long afterwards some of them declared, that whenever anxious thoughts threw a gloomy shadow upon their path, they scattered them by again reading the 46th Psalm."

The following narrative will illustrate the power of God's own word to comfort sufferers in circumstances than which few can be conceived more distressing. And I give it with the more confidence because of my personal knowledge of the gentleman who is at once its subject and its author.

Among the hairbreadth escapes of Englishmen during the Indian mutiny of 1857, few were more singular or romantic than those of Mr. William Edwards, an Indian magistrate and judge, as recorded in his "Personal Adventures." Compelled in his flight to abandon and burn his own clothes, and to disguise himself as a native, he contrived to save a small New Testament, which, he says, proved "a solace to him in many an hour of anguish and peril." For many weeks, he and some friends lay concealed in the heart of a dense jungle, in a wretched, solitary hamlet of four or five houses, inhabited by only a few herdsmen and their cattle. The hovel, to which they were conducted in the darkness of the night, was full of cattle and very filthy. Over this was a little room with a water-tight roof. And this room the thakoors, who aided their concealment, allowed them, eight persons in all, to occupy, provided they

kept strictly within it, and never showed themselves outside, lest their hiding-place should be discovered. The corner occupied by Mr. Edwards, he tells us, was neither so broad nor so long as the smallest berth in a ship's cabin. The heat was intense. The fugitives could get out only at night; and during the day the only relief they had was to turn on their backs, or from one side to the other, or sit up: standing or moving about was impossible. In these circumstances, hunted for their lives by human bloodhounds, and harrowed by the terrible tales which reached them from Cawnpore and other places, was there aught in heaven or earth that could comfort them? There was; and they lived together in that jungle-prison "in comparative peace," "finding God, as he will be found by all who seek him, a very present help in time of trouble."

The place of their concealment bore the appropriate name of "the place of afflictions." But as there was a power which could sweeten even the waters of Marah, so there was a power which could make "the place of afflictions" an abode of comfort. Writing of one of the Lord's days spent there, Mr. Edwards says:—"Our morning service to-day was one of peculiar solemnity, for we know not how soon our own fate might be the same as that of those dear friends and acquaintances so lately with us in health and vigour, and who, we had too much reason to fear, had all been massacred. In the midst of this depression, the reflection came upon me with a peculiar soothing and strengthening power, that the petition in the Litany, 'That it might please God to succour,

help, and comfort, all that are in danger, necessity, and tribulation,' which we knew would be offered in earnestness on this day for us by our beloved relations and friends, wherever they were, and by thousands of God's servants throughout the earth, would no doubt go up with acceptance, and that we should yet be saved and be reunited to our people. The intimation, also, in the 11th of Hebrews, that some of God's people, through faith, had escaped the edge of the sword, seemed to be lit up, as it were, with a gleam of light as I read it. If they had been thus saved, why might not we hope to be so also? The arm that saved them was not shortened that it could not save us; and the ear that heard and answered their prayers was equally open and ready to receive ours, offered, as they were, in the name and for the sake of the same Saviour and all-powerful Advocate. Already has the promise, 'I will be with him in trouble and will deliver him,' been fulfilled so singularly in my own case, that surely it does not now become me to doubt. My heart was thus raised from the borders of despair to nearly an assured hope, and almost to cheerfulness."

Soon after this, a lady of the party received a box belonging to her, which contained her Bible. "And oh! what comfort it has been to us since," wrote Mr. Edwards, "as we are thereby enabled to read the Psalms. There is not a day on which we do not find something that appears as if written expressly for persons in our circumstances, to meet the feelings and wants of the day. What a blessing it is to us," he added, "having the Scriptures with us! I have

no books, and no other employment than studying them; and what a source of real substantial comfort they are! But, alas! the bitter thought constantly occurs, 'For you these lessons how to lead a Christian life are no longer applicable; you have now but to study how to meet death like a Christian.'

One death occurred in this hidden party. It was that of a babe, and the parents, although in deep grief at losing their child, felt thankful that its death had been natural and not by the hands of assassins. It was about two in the morning that the spirit of the little one fled, and the body must be laid in the grave before day-break. A dry spot was selected at some distance in the jungle. The babe was wrapped in a sheet and carried in his father's arms. "I read a few sentences of the burial service over him," says Mr. Edwards. "There was no time for more, as day was fast breaking, and we dare not be seen beyond the village in the daylight; so we laid him in his little resting-place, dust to dust, ashes to ashes, in sure and certain hope, and hastily covered him in."

When, by the good hand of their God upon them, Mr. Edwards and his friends found themselves in a house again, for the first time after three months, and in a position of comparative security, they "felt quite awe struck." "And," he says, "with hearts overflowing with thankfulness, we knelt down together to bless our God who had so wonderfully 'delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and from those who lay in wait for us by the way.'"

What the book of God was to those who were thus for so long a period as "the hunted partridge on the

mountains," with but a step between them and death, and that in a fearful form, it has been, and continues to be, to sufferers of all classes, and under all circumstances.

But what is it in the word of God that makes the holy book so mighty to comfort and strengthen the hearts of men? Single texts and isolated promises are of little avail to those who know not God himself. They may sometimes even misguide them, and encourage them in a boldness and confidence which, if they were better instructed, they would not dare to cherish. The glory of the Bible is that it reveals God; it makes known the attributes of his character and the principles of his government. And they only who know him as revealed by himself can find their rest in him. It will not then be vain or lost labour to follow with some care the course of God's revelation of himself, and see how in every part of it he is manifested as both Light and Love.

These—Light and Love—are the terms in which the last of the apostles summed up the Divine character. The one includes his knowledge, and purity, and justice. The other includes his compassion, and mercy, and grace. There are times when our comfort must be drawn not from the assurance that God is Love, but from the assurance that he is Light. While most commonly the burden of our song is, "Give thanks unto the Lord, for his *mercy* endureth for ever," occasions do occur when we feel ourselves moved to "give thanks at the remembrance of his *holiness*." There are periods of which it may be said

that for many days neither sun, nor moon, nor stars appear. Clouds and darkness, all earth-born, seem to cover the world with a thick pall, through which no light penetrates. But let us believe that God is "righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works," and we shall not doubt that sun, and moon, and stars are in their accustomed place, and shine with their accustomed brightness. The holiness of God will in these circumstances be as the bow in the cloud, a means of comfort and strength to the believer's heart. Separate the idea of the Divine love from the idea of the Divine righteousness, and it will degenerate in our apprehensions of it into something like a weak, fatherly indulgence. Combine the two ideas, and you have the key to some of the most perplexing mysteries of man's history and of God's government. Whoso glorieth then, let him glory in this, that he understandeth God that he is Jehovah, which exerciseth "loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth."*

The existence of a holy retributive Providence may be traced very clearly through both national and individual story. Few thoughtful men fail to perceive the thread of justice which runs through the whole texture of human life. In every form of literature in which men have embodied their thoughts, not excepting the lowest and ungodliest, the principle of retribution, sin followed by misery, the wrongdoer overtaken by punishment, obtains a striking prominence. No principle is more readily accepted as true, both to our knowledge of what is and to our

* Jer. ix. 24.

sense of what ought to be. Writers and readers thus involuntarily render homage to "the God of judgment."

But "God is Love" likewise. Often as men presume upon the mercy of God, forgetful of his righteousness, they sometimes find it more difficult to believe that God is good than to believe that he is just. Two officers of the army were conversing on religious subjects in which their hearts were interested, and were overheard by a brother officer who was sitting not far from them, one of the most careless and ungodly men in the regiment. In their conversation the words, "God is Love," were spoken by one of them, and heard by the unobserved listener. The latter rose, and, in an excited manner, said, "What! do you mean to say—do you really believe what you say, that God is love?" They replied that they had no doubt of it. He left them, and shut himself up for three days, in great distress of mind. What his feelings were we can only imagine. But we may well suppose that he was covered with shame in remembering how he had wronged God by evil thoughts of his character, and by daily breaking his law. At the end of three days, he came forth from his chamber, his face beaming with peace and happiness, and told his friends that he, too, now believed that "God is Love." And he thenceforward lived a holy and godly life, such as becomes a new creature in Jesus Christ.

Being Light and Love, God is the God of consolation; and our endeavour must now be to trace his

manifestation of himself in this character. This we can do in the very earliest page of human history.

That was a sad day when our first parents committed their first sin. In vain we seek for words and images to describe it. It was "a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness,"* a "day of the very shadow of death." Well might the sun have withdrawn his shining, as he did four thousand years after, when the Incarnate One was bleeding on Calvary. The new-made world might have trembled to its centre through fear of the consequences of the wrong committed on that day. God erected his throne of judgment in paradise, as the history tells us, and called Adam and Eve before him. In fulfilment of his word, he laid righteousness to the plummet, and swept away the refuge of lies in which the tempter's victims had trusted. But there was a rainbow round about the throne on that dark, dread day; and when judgment pronounced its sentence mercy proclaimed its promise—The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent. The God of truth was the God of mercy as well; and the guilty were dismissed from his presence, not to linger for a few years in a convict's cell and then perish, but to enjoy hopes of pardon and life, to walk with God in humility and faith and in ordinances adapted to their new condition, and then to enter a paradise into which no tempter could follow them. The very words with which our first parents were driven out of

* Zeph. i. 15.

their now forfeited home into the world's wilderness, while they are words of judgment, are not without a gleam of light and mercy. "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Severe, righteously severe, this sentence reads; but ponder it, and you will find its severity tempered with mercy. The sorrow which it denounces, and which accompanies the toils of life, is doubtless an evil. The "sweat of the brow" is the sign not of that healthful labour which was man's lot in innocence, but of the exhaustion and difficulty which attend man's work in his state of sin. But still there is mercy in the sentence. If the ground brings forth thorns and thistles, it likewise brings forth the herb of the field by which man and beast are fed. It is in sorrow that man eats of the fruit of the ground, but it is of mercy that he is permitted to eat of it at all. He must pay for bread with the sweat of his brow, but it is of Divine goodness there is bread to procure at any price.

And even that sorrow and that sweat, the signs and fruits of the curse, are not unmingled evils in the circumstances in which they are exacted. Pleasure in sin is in many respects a greater curse than sorrow. Success in crime is a greater curse than failure. Painless disease is more dangerous than painful, because it gives no warning of its existence. Let

man go forth from paradise, a sinner ; with the curse of God upon him, but with no signs of that curse ; to labour for his bread, but to have no sorrow or sweat in labour ; to till the ground, but to have no thorns and thistles to root up—it may be an easy life, a pleasant life, but it will be a most dangerous life. The world which a sinner needs for correction and discipline is a wilderness, not a paradise ; a wilderness in which the sun shall smite by day and the moon by night, in which ravening beasts shall roam and devour, in which disease and death shall be familiar sights. And the sentence which drove man out into such a world, while it inflicted righteous punishment, conferred a great blessing.

We are thus introduced, on the very threshold of human history, to a principle which runs through the entire government of the world in its fallen state, a principle which reveals the wisdom that is ever found in inseparable alliance with Divine mercy.

“ In sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life,” are the words of the Divine sentence ; and the words foretold not the mere painfulness of labour, but the sorrowful complexion of man’s whole life on earth. It is a life of sorrow ; at its best estate a life of sorrow ; in its highest and most favourable conditions a life of sorrow. The sentence has taken full effect. But this sentence, we have said, was one of mercy as well as judgment. Of the principle that “ whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth,” there was an earnest given in the very hour of man’s expulsion from paradise. The silver lining of love relieved the thick cloud which rested on the lot of the exiles.

The sorrow to which they were doomed was not a hopeless sorrow. It was a sorrow which, through the mercy which began, even then, to educe good out of evil, might become a great blessing. A perpetual memorial of lost innocence and lost happiness, it taught men the sin of departing from the living God, and might incline their hearts to seek his favour. Pointing, as it ever did, to the frown and displeasure of the great Father of fallen man, it warned men to seek again the face and favour of Him in whom is life. Had the sentence been one of abandonment and unmingled wrath, it would have doomed us to a very different sorrow; not the sorrow of a condition which, with all its miseries, is full of signs of the presiding presence of the God of all patience and comfort, but the sorrow of a condition whose only fit signs are darkness and death.

“Through night to day!
 And when the solemn fold
 Of darkness wraps creation all,
 Trust on! trust on!
 For sunrise, bright and bold,
 Shall break and burst the midnight pall.

“Through death to life!
 Ay, through this vale of tears,
 The thorny path of being, hurled;
 High, high above,
 We reach heaven’s wedding-feast—
 The joy, the gladness of a better world.

“Through sweat to sleep!
 And when the mid-day sun
 Wears thee, and wastes with sultry heat,
 Trust on! trust on!
 Soon blows the evening wind,
 To rock and soothe thy slumber sweet.

“Through cross to cure !
And when the ills of life,
Like demons, haunt thy weary bed,
Trust on ! trust on !
Soon shall, 'mid direst griefs,
The peace of God be o'er thee spread.”

Let us follow the story of our first parents a little further. How intensely must they have rejoiced in the light of the first Sabbath which dawned upon them after their expulsion from paradise; and how vividly must they have realized on that Sabbath morning the character even of their offended God as the God of consolation.

The Sabbatic institute is as old as the days of Adam. It “was made for man.” It was “sanctified,” or set apart from the other days of the week, for his use and observance. Our first parents enjoyed it in their first home, and the precious gift was not withdrawn when they were driven from it. God did not in judgment reduce the holy day to a level with the other days of the week, and break down the hedges thereof, so that all the labours and noises of the week might rush in to waste and devour it. When Adam and Eve went forth from the garden into the wilderness, from pleasant labour to toil and sweat, their good was consulted in that they were still to rest on the seventh day and to hallow it. They went forth under the frown of their God, but still with the privilege of hope in his forgiving mercy and fatherly care.

And the first Sabbath that shone upon them in exile must have uttered voices both of sorrow and of joy in their ears. It would speak to them of the

happiness they enjoyed before sin marred their glorious communion with God ; it would overwhelm them with shame to think of their folly and sin in disobeying a Father so good and holy ; it would fill them with joyous amazement at the rich grace which could pardon their transgressions and reunite them to the God from whom sin had severed them ; and it would draw from their lips new songs of praise, in which redeeming mercy should be celebrated in sweeter and louder strains than creative power. Every ray of Sabbath light would be as a pencil to inscribe on their souls the name of God as the God of love.

Our first parents were now in very different circumstances from those in which they had spent their former Sabbaths. They had within them the beginnings of all those cares, and fears, and woes, and wants, which are the common heritage of their posterity. The disease and death of after-generations cast their shadows upon them. And the cup of the world's weariness and restlessness they had to drink. Welcome to them in these circumstances was the light of the Sabbath. With unvarying constancy it repeated the wondrous tale of the love of Him who had not cast them off, who had not forgotten to be gracious, and whose mercy waited to bestow on them the rest of which it was the symbol.

And Sabbath light has the same import still. It is a perpetual sign to us that God has not forsaken the world which has so wickedly forsaken him. To say nothing of the many privileges of worship and instruction which it brings with it, it is itself a Divine

witness that we have a Father in heaven who cares for us, who sees every burden we bear, who has provided resting-places for our weary journey, and who invites us to drink of the brook by the way. When bowed down with sad discouragement under the world's load, travelling through life with a halting step and a weary heart, the sunshine of the Sabbath bids us be of good cheer, and remember that God is over all, watching our steps, pitying our weaknesses, supplying our wants, and somehow or other working good for us out of all our trouble.

The weekly Sabbath has another aspect of deep interest to those who groan under the burden and cares of life. It is not only commemorative of works already finished, the works of creation and redemption, but prophetic of a rest not yet attained, only promised and made sure by the word of God. The apostle Paul argues after this manner: To Israel, when in conflict with the privations and troubles of the wilderness, God promised rest in Canaan; he did this although, age after age, mankind had been invited, weekly, to enter into rest with God in memory of the works which had been finished from the foundation of the world. And then, long after Israel was established in the promised land, the writer of the ninety-fifth Psalm spoke of another day, a day of testing and of trial, in a manner which indicated that rest was a thing still future and not a thing already possessed. For if Joshua had given the people rest when he led them into Canaan—if the rest which was then given had been final, complete, and exhaustive of the Divine promise—the Holy Spirit would not, as

he did by the psalmist, still direct the people forward; he would not have spoken of another day wherein they should be tried, and of another rest as dependent on the result of the trial. Therefore it is evident, the apostle argues, that there remaineth a rest to which the people have not yet come; a rest to which it is the duty and interest of all to press forward; a rest which is to be entered by faith, even as the rest of the weekly Sabbath is entered by faith and not by form, and as the rest of Canaan was entered by faith and not by the title of descent from Abraham. Unbelief excludes from the true enjoyment of the weekly rest: unbelief excluded a whole generation of Israelites from the rest of Canaan. "Let us labour therefore," says Paul, "to enter into that rest" which is still future, "lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." *

The apostle's manner of putting these things is very suggestive. He makes every rest which has hitherto been granted to man a prophecy of a higher and better rest still future. Other rests were good and real of their kind, such as the weekly Sabbath and the land of Canaan. But they were incomplete, and left those who enjoyed them unsatisfied, to thirst and long for something not yet attained. They awakened hopes which they did not themselves fulfil; and these hopes, we are assured, are not doomed to disappointment. There is a rest, the consummation of all earlier and lower rests, still in the future, a rest that shall leave no holy craving unsatisfied, a

* Heb iv.

rest within the heavenly fold, a rest with God and in God.

Here, then, is one of the uses of our earthly Sabbaths. God lures us on from Sabbath to Sabbath with the promise of rest, giving us Sabbath by Sabbath a foretaste of the promised rest. And the richer and fuller this foretaste is, instead of making us content with our present portion, it quickens our desire for that which is to come. While he lures us from Sabbath onward to Sabbath with the hope of that which is not yet seen, he makes each Sabbath as it comes a means of turning us from hopes and rests which are not kindred to either the earthly or the heavenly Sabbath. Christians are heirs of a very glorious inheritance. But "the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all;" and we, in our present earthly servitude, have to endure the sorrow and the sweat of the ancient curse.

Thus toiling and sorrowing, our ears are saluted with promises of rest on every side, our hearts are flattered with hopes which are baseless as a dream; and we are conscious of many an inward drawing towards things on which is written the old inscription, "Vanity of vanities." The Sabbath comes to break the spell and to keep us steadfast, or to reclaim us if we have wandered. It maketh us to lie down in green pastures: it leadeth us beside still waters. That is a true rest which it gives us, but it is a rest which is prophetic of something better than itself, having in it, as George Herbert expresses it, the fruit of this world and the bud of the next.

"O day most calm, most bright,
 The fruit of this, the next world's bud,
 The indorsement of supreme delight,
 Writ by a Friend and with his blood;
 The couch of time; care's balm and bay;
 The week were dark but for thy light;
 Thy torch doth show the way.

"The other days and thou
 Make up one man; whose face thou art,
 Knocking at heaven with thy brow:
 The working days are the back part;
 The burden of the week lies there,
 Making the whole to stoop and bow,
 Till thy release appear."

Are your hearts, then, oppressed with the burdens of life? Do numberless cares and nameless anxieties make you weary of the world? Only think, God knows your burdens, and cares, and anxieties, every one, and sends you weekly in the Sabbath institute a promise and prophecy of an eternal rest. His Sabbath is not only a sign of the favour with which he still regards our guilty world, but a pledge of that state from which the curse and all its fruits shall be shut out for ever. By his Sabbath he not only provides for you present refreshment and strength, but beckons you forward and upward, from hope to hope; not tantalizing you with the prospect of blessings which he does not permit you to taste; not deceiving you with the vision of a beautiful mirage, whose waters, when reached, are nothing but burning sand; but giving you present earnestness of the good that is in store for you, and pledging his own truth and faithfulness to the accomplishment of every word that has proceeded from his mouth.

Lift up your hearts, then, ye that labour and are

heavy laden. The promise of rest, of which the light of every Sabbath is the bearer, will be fulfilled. The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain through manifold afflictions, but your redemption draweth nigh. Heaven and earth shall pass away; but there remaineth a rest for the people of God, and in the possession of that rest the memory of weary footsteps trodden along the dusty road of your earthly pilgrimage will be cherished only to make your rest the sweeter and your praise the louder.

“ Rest returns with Sabbath morning :
 Leave the rugged path of care :
 ‘ Come, come, come ! ’ the bells are ringing ;
 Weary souls to God are singing ;
 Hearts to heaven their way are winging,
 Bearing upward fervent prayer.

“ Rest returns with Sabbath morning,
 A peculiar time to pray :
 Leave each worldly avocation ;
 Think, oh think of thy salvation !
 Love and praise, the heart’s oblation,
 Offer in God’s house to-day.

“ Rest returns with Sabbath morning :
 May thy soul a Patmos be !
 All thy thoughts to heaven inclining ;
 Royal angels near thee shining ;
 Darkest clouds with glory lining ;
 Christ Immanuel teaching thee !

“ Rest returns with Sabbath morning,
 Journeying to the promised land :
 Be thy curtained soul pervaded
 By the Presence ! undegraded
 By intruding sins ! and shaded
 ‘ Neath the cloudy pillar grand ! ”

CHAPTER III.

THE GOD OF CONSOLATION:

MANIFESTED IN THE LIFE AND TRANSLATION OF ENOCH.

CONTENTS.—Between the Fall and the Flood—One precious historical fragment—Communion with God a happy possibility—Difficulties in the way; but not insuperable—Means of their removal—Enoch possibly instructed by Adam—Divine pleasure in holiness—The assurance of a future and better state—The argumentative value of one fact—The ancients' knowledge of a future state—Doctrine of immortality inseparable from religion—The present incomplete without the future—Remarks of Wilberforce—Verses by Dr. Horatius Bonar.

“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.”—HEB. xi. 5.

“And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”—JUDE 14, 15.

"Hast thou not seen at break of day,
One only star the east adorning,
That never set, or paled its ray,
But seemed to sink at once away
Into the light of morning?"

"Like him of old who dwelt beneath
The tents of patriarchal story,
Who passed, without the touch of death,
Without dim eye or failing breath,
At once into God's glory.

"The patriarch of one simple spot ;
The sire of sons and daughters lowly ;
And this the record of his lot :
'He walked with God, and he was not,'
For the Lord took him wholly.

"Like a child's voice in sacred song,
That trembling rises high and higher
Till, lost at last, it peals along,
Swelling the anthem sweet and strong
Of great cathedral choir ;

"So, year by year, and day by day,
In pastoral care and household duty,
He walked with God, nor knew decay,
But gently faded, rapt away,
Into His glorious beauty.

"Oh that our thoughts so heavenly were,
Our hearts to Christ so fully given,
That all our loves, and toils, and care,
Might only lead us nearer there,
Where he is set in heaven !"

C. F. ALEXANDER.

THE GOD OF CONSOLATION:

MANIFESTED IN THE LIFE AND TRANSLATION OF ENOCH.

OF the fifteen hundred years which intervened between the Fall and the Flood we know nothing but what is recorded in the fourth and fifth chapters of Genesis. And brief, very brief, as is the record, we can see God manifesting himself throughout that period as the God of consolation. So long as Adam lived, and that was for nine hundred years, more than half the entire period, his descendants could not be ignorant of those Divine institutes, the Sabbath and sacrifice; and those who were called by the name of the Lord could not fail to find in both a perpetual testimony to the love and mercy of God.

But we shall, perhaps, best perceive the light of consolation which shone on that early age, if we concentrate our attention on one very precious part of the record: "Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah: and Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: and all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: and Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." * We connect with this original statement the

* Gen. v. 21-24.

apostle Paul's comment upon it: "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God."*

On reading this remarkable narrative we seem to hear a Divine voice saying, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." For here, in the first place, we have an example of friendly and loving communion between God and man.

The very possibility of such communion sheds light on our darkness; and every example of its actual existence and enjoyment is fraught with hope. May I, a very worm as I am, born yesterday and dying to-morrow, aspire to commune with the Majesty of heaven and earth? My littleness and his greatness combine to forbid it. "Will God in very deed dwell with men?" Were I to answer this question for myself, I should say, *No*. The distance which separates them is infinite. They must remain apart; God amid the grandeurs of his eternal throne, man in the little nest which he builds for himself in the dust of the ground. But this would be to answer the question after the manner of men. We must hear what God says. "His thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways." He *will* dwell with man on the earth. Material greatness and material littleness are nothing in his sight; but to this man will he look, even to him that is humble and contrite, and that reverenceth his word. In his Godlike condescension his delights are with the sons

* Heb. xi. 5.

of men. The distance between the Creator and the creature is not too wide to be spanned by the love which the Father bears to the child.

But there is another difficulty in the way: we are sinners; and both our guilt and our pollution forbid the hope of communion with God. We, miserable offenders, how can we enter the presence of the Just One, whose law we have trampled under foot? We, tainted and defiled by sin, how can we have friendship with the Holy One, whose name and nature are Light? God and we cannot commune as Father and child, as Friend and friend, except we be agreed; and agreement is impossible so long as guilt remains unpardoned and defilement unpurified. This is a greater difficulty by far than the natural distance which must ever separate the finite from the Infinite. And let us find one instance in which the difficulty is overcome, and the fact may be proclaimed as a joy to the world. One instance will prove the thing to be possible. There *is* some way by which the problem of reconciliation and agreement is solved, some way by which the gulf may be crossed. The difficulty, vast as it is, and perplexing as it is, is not insuperable. Such an instance we have in Enoch; not assuredly the first of its kind, but the first that has been recorded in those striking words, "He walked with God." Enoch was involved in all the ruin which followed Adam's transgression. He inherited, as we do, the bitter consequences of the Fall. Sin separated between him and God; and yet the fact is proclaimed, "Enoch walked with God." He was made nigh. Nearness took the place of

distance, and communion the place of hostile separation.

The means by which Enoch was reconciled and entered into peace with God is no secret. The promise by which the first sinners were comforted, even before they were driven out of Paradise, must have been repeated thousands of times by those who heard it, to their children and their children's children, who were involved with them in one common ruin. And its meaning must have been the subject of earnest study and converse by all true and thoughtful believers. Could Adam be for three hundred years cotemporary with Enoch, a man so holy and devout, and they two not often discourse together of paradise, and of the rainbow of peace and hope which arched the dark cloud when God said, The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent?

In the history of Enoch we have, further, an unmistakable proof of God's pleasure in and approval of holiness. And this, too, may be appealed to as illustrative of the Divine character as the God of consolation. Ungodliness was already lifting up its head boldly and blasphemously in the world in the days of Enoch, as we gather from the fact that Enoch prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." Amidst

abounding ungodliness and sin there might be not a few who were oppressed with the thought that all this evil existed in a world which God had made and still ruled. Sighing in secret, both over the prevalence of sin and over its prosperity, many a perplexed and faint-hearted servant of God may have described the state of things around him, and his own despondency, in such words as were written long after :—

“ Their eyes stand out with fatness :
 They have more than heart could wish.
 They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression : they speak loftily.
 They set their mouth against the heavens,
 And their tongue walketh through the earth.
 Therefore His people return hither :
 And waters of a full cup are wrung out to them.
 And they say, How doth God know ?
 And is there knowledge in the Most High ?
 Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world ; they increase in riches.
 Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain,
 And washed my hands in innocency.” *

To some of these questions there was answer given, and to some of these repinings there was reproof administered, by the well-known fact of the Divine approval of Enoch, and the translation of him to another state without tasting death. It still remained a mystery how sin could spring up in the universe of a holy God ; and it might remain a distressing wonder that it should acquire such prosperity. But there could be no doubt that God’s eye rested on the evil and on the good that were in the world, beholding and judging both ; that he loved

* Ps. lxxiii. 7—13.

righteousness and hated iniquity; and that although it might please him to allow his own servants to be outrun in this world's race by the wicked, and even to be oppressed by them, they were his delight, and should not go without their reward. For them, it was evident, he had provided better things than he bestowed on the ungodly, or allowed the ungodly to grasp for themselves. Behind a frowning providence it was now proved that he hid a smiling face. And the desponding might lift up their heads and declare, notwithstanding all appearances to the contrary, "Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart." "The Lord loveth the righteous: but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down."

This is a lesson of truest consolation. No doubt would be so torturing to our spirits, and so destructive to our peace and comfort, as the doubt of God's righteousness. The God that was pleased with holy Enoch, and translated him that he should not see death, proclaimed himself to Enoch's cotemporaries a holy God; and we to-day, comforted with the assurance, give God "thanks at the remembrance of his holiness."

There is a third element of joy and comfort in the history of Enoch: the assurance of a future and better state which his translation gave to the world. A thousand years was long enough to produce scepticism as to man's nature and the nature of the world in which man found himself. That scepticism might be met in many ways. The first father of the race was dead but about sixty years when Enoch, the seventh

from Adam, was translated ; and of certain facts testified by Adam for nearly a thousand years there could be no reasonable doubt. The unity of the race could not be questioned. The history of paradise must have been familiar to all, and the mistakes of tradition concerning it could be corrected at any time by an appeal to Adam. Let that history be true, and there could be no doubt that there was a God, and that man was not only God's creature, but made in God's image, and endowed with a spirit which was not dependent for its existence on the body into which it was put, and which was directly responsible to God for every choice it made and every act it performed.

To the aid of such historical arguments might be brought what we may call logical arguments. The men of the first thousand years were not children ; far less were they barbarians. The fathers of the race had abundant means of knowledge, and their intellects were exercised and quickened by "reason of use" extended over a life of hundreds of years. They could argue, as well as we, that the capacities with which men are endowed mark them out for an immortal existence. On the supposition that man is merely mortal they could see as clearly as we do, that there is an unaccountable disproportion between the faculties with which he is endowed and the sphere he is destined to occupy ; "an absurdity of precisely the same kind," to use the words of Mr. Henry Rogers, "as if the capacities of an angel had been deposited in some ephemeral insect, to perish in the very day which gave them birth. What would this be but a

prodigal waste of the power of God, and a gross reflection on his wisdom and benevolence?"

Still, a thousand years were long enough to produce sceptics and scepticism; and the argument of a later age might already be used, "All things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."* For a thousand years there had been no visible change in the world. The constancy of nature, to use our modern phrase, had not once, so far as we know, been interrupted: seed-time had followed seed-time; harvest had been reaped after harvest; age had followed age; thunders had roared, and lightnings flashed; seas had flowed and ebbed; suns had risen and set; moons had waxed and waned. And all this time, God, if there was a God, had not broken silence, had not declared himself. Who could tell that this state of things had not been from everlasting? Who could tell but that it would continue for ever? In vain to ask such reasoners questions which would reduce their suppositions to absurdities. Only let godliness decline, and the sense of God's law and presence in the world become faint, and sceptics could easily produce an impression and involve men in wonderment and doubt. And even the better-thinking portion of the community might become faint-hearted, and long for some sign from Heaven that should determine the question and strike conviction into every soul.

In these circumstances the translation of a holy man who had witnessed against the world's sins and doubts, who had spoken to his fellows of God and his

* 2 Pet. iii. 4.

law and a coming judgment with the authority of a prophet, was the very sign from Heaven which that generation needed. And although it be true that even if one rise from the dead men can find means of evading the testimony which the fact bears to the existence of a future state and of the world of spirits, yet such an exemption from death as that of Enoch, such a mode of departure from the midst of men as must have been that of Enoch, was the very miracle which the world then needed. And a miracle of the richest consolation it was; a miracle to confirm the faith of believers, to end the doubts of honest and perplexed inquirers, and to put to shame those whose doubts were only the shifts of wicked hearts to evade the sense of responsibility to God.

“Under whatever circumstances the miracle occurred,—whether secret and sudden; whether unexpected or promised, whether witnessed at the moment, or afterwards ascertained by subsequent evidence,—there can be no doubt that it was known and believed by the existing generation; some and sufficient means were employed by Providence to impress its truth upon the public mind; and the intention of Providence unquestionably was, to give a certainty and a sanction to those truths which the patriarch had preached, and to exhibit, in his own person, a splendid display of the reality of them all.”

One fact is often said to be worth a thousand arguments; and here was a fact which must have thrilled with exultation all who feared God in that early age. It was life from the dead to them, in the despondency with which they contemplated the world's degeneracy.

It brought heaven very near to earth, and God very near to man. In the light of it the constancy of nature could not be interpreted as the mere regularity of an inanimate and self-acting machine: it was only the constancy or uniformity of the principles on which God regulated his works; a constancy which did not divest him of either the right or the power to act as he pleased. From the highest heavens he now declared that death, so uniform and constant, is something more than a law of nature; that it is the fulfilment of his own decree, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

Can any man think of these things without feeling profoundly thankful that God has interrupted the course of what we call nature, and has determined by unmistakable miracles questions which, with all the light that can be otherwise thrown on them, will still perplex and trouble men's souls? Without an occasional miracle in the world's history, "would not"—to use the words of an able writer—"would not the fingers of the Most High have seemed to stiffen and draw back from the harp of nature? would not the eternal monotone have become oppressive and overpowering; and would it not have passed at last into a long wail of despair, moaning eternally that there is no God?"

"As our faith in the promises of God is greatly assisted by knowing not merely the truth that he can do what he has said, but the fact that in some instances he has actually done it; so, in this view, the translation of Enoch may prove of inestimable value to the church. God has already conferred all the benefits of a resurrection upon some of our brethren

‘of like passion with ourselves;’ and what he has done once he can do again; what he has done for others he can do for us; what he has done in a single instance he can do in ten thousand. We have already in heaven, not merely the glorified body of the Lord, whose mysterious nature and immaculate perfection constitute so essential a difference between him and us as at times to awe and to repress, rather than excite; but we have a representative and a brother, in one who was once subject to sin, and had to struggle with depravity, as much perhaps as the worst and weakest of us all; and we feel that the very same grace to which he was indebted for his illustrious virtue and sublime elevation, can, and will, if we trust it, convey us into the same region, and place us in safety by his side.”

We stand beside this record of Enoch’s translation, then, with holy thankfulness. We rejoice that the silence and uniformity of nature were broken. Men die; but holy men, who walked with God on earth, still walk with God after they die. There is a world that is not seen, as well as a world that is seen. God is, and he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

This is not the place for inquiring what degree of light the ancient saints, in days after those of Enoch, possessed touching the great question of a future state. But that they did know that there is a future and happy existence beyond the grave, we are assured by our Lord himself. “Ye do err,” he said to the Sadducees, the sceptics of his time, “not knowing

the Scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." The apostle Paul interpreted the faith of the patriarchs in the same way. "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. . . . These all died, in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city." *

The truth is, that the idea of immortality is inseparable from the idea of religion. "God and immortality are the two great pillars on which rests

* Heb. xi. 8-10, 13-16.

the edifice of all religion. Remove either of them, and the entire structure falls into ruins."

"If we suppose religion," to use the words of John Howe, somewhat abridged, "to become with any the ruling principle, how would even that languish with the best, were the consideration of a future state laid aside. Religion terminates upon God, and upon him under a double notion; either as we design service and honour to him, or as from him we design satisfaction and blessedness to ourselves. Now, if a man's thoughts be carried towards God under the former notion, how great an abatement must it needs be to the vigour and zeal of his affection, to reflect upon the universal mortality of himself and mankind without any hope of a future immortality. And if the propension of a man's soul be towards God under the latter notion also, that is, in order to the satisfaction that shall accrue to himself, it cannot but be an unspeakable check to the highest delights to think how soon they shall have an end, and that the darkness and dust of the grave shall shortly obscure and extinguish the glory of this lightsome scene." How entirely David could sympathize with these thoughts, how he associated the idea of faith in God, and of happiness derived from God, with the idea of such faith and happiness being for ever, we know: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart failed: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

It is not merely when bereavements overwhelm

us, or when disease or old age brings us very near the end of our earthly existence, that we feel the power to comfort which lies in the doctrine of which the world received certainty by the translation of Enoch. That doctrine is necessary to our rest and quietude throughout life, if we are only thoughtful, and look beneath the surface of things. "What is this life for? we instinctively inquire. We bury our dead, and ponder upon our own fate, with this question on our lips. It will come up in spite of us. Forty years, fifty years, yea, seventy! how quickly they fly! how soon they are gone! And is this all—all of man, and all for man? No! is the instant response of thought, without even pausing to make an analysis of its grounds. The infant born to-day, and dead to-morrow, with no being after death! Then why born at all? Why any mental life with such a fate so near? Why the breath of being, merely to have an end, but not a reason? The rose that has spent its fragrance may properly wither and die; but man seems made in vain if the brief hours of this short sojourn be all that the God of nature has assigned to him. Breathing, and thinking, and dying, would then be the successive stages of a tragic farce, afflictive and awful by reason of our capacity to see it."

"It need not excite our wonder that atheists are sour and morose. The only wonder is that they do not die with self-disgust. They have no faith beyond the present; to them no better sky scatters the shades of this; in their vision no brighter heavens stretch beyond the narrow firmament of time. How they

can live if they think, as they profess to do, is the mystery. Let them be cold and sullen, half mad. It is the sad doom of their creed. No solar beam touches or warms their nature. And time is a riddle, perplexing enough at best, yet awful if no future let fall its ray upon these shores."

"What importance," said William Wilberforce, when taking a retrospect of his life from near the borders of another world, "does it give to life when it is regarded in its true character, as the probation in which are to become constitutional the dispositions which must form our meetness for the heavenly state! When the real purpose and grand end of life is compared with that low view of it which is taken by the votaries of ambition, or even of literature and science, the contrast between the joys of children and the researches and pursuits of manhood is a most feeble and inadequate illustration." "The main fault of the present day," he repeatedly declared in his old age, "is the making knowledge and intellectual advancement the great object of pursuit, instead of that moral improvement by which we may be fitted for a higher and better state. Much mystery overhangs the one, and time with an oblivious touch effaces the little we do attain of science; but blessed is he who attains some lineaments of the moral image of God, for he shall see Him as he is, and then shall know even as now he is known."

Happiest of men we must pronounce him to be who has such hopes and aims as these. "The great future for which he sighs will soon invite him home.

He will there forget the troubles of his former self.
 A child now! Then, by contrast, a child no more!
 Welcome, death: thy coming is not an evening, but
 rather the morning of endless day! Thy blow is
 less a blow than a gentle touch from immortality!
 Come, chase away these shades which environ
 saintship; break these bands of limitation and ig-
 norance; and let piety go forth to find her God, and
 in that God, her full fruition."

"The star is not extinguished when it sets
 Upon the dull horizon: it but goes
 To shine in other skies, then re-appear
 In ours, as fresh as when it first arose.

"The river is not lost when, o'er the rock,
 It pours its flood into the abyss below:
 Its scattered force regathering from the shock,
 It hastens onward with yet fuller flow.

"The bright sun dies not when the shadowing orb
 Of the eclipsing moon obscures its ray:
 It still is shining on, and soon to us
 Will burst undimmed into the joy of day.

"Thus in the quiet joy of kindly trust
 We bid each parting saint a brief farewell:
 Weeping, yet smiling, we commit their dust
 To the safe keeping of the silent cell.

Softly within that peaceful resting-place
 We lay their weary limbs, and bid the clay
 Press lightly on them, till the night be past,
 And the far east give note of coming day."

CHAPTER IV.

THE GOD OF CONSOLATION :

MANIFESTED IN THE EXODUS AND IN THE WILDERNESS.

CONTENTS.—“God is faithful”—The promise not forgotten—With God all things are possible—Difficulties to be overcome—Abraham strong in faith, but not exempt from failure—The people baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea—The cloud not withdrawn—God with his people alway—The privileges of the Christian Israel—The waters of Marah—Why such a beginning—The waters of Elim—The smitten rock—Verses by Cennick.

“Israel hath gathered some rust in idolatrous Egypt, and now he must be scourged : they had borne the burden of God’s anger if they had not borne the burdens of the Egyptians. . . Oh the sovereign goodness of our God, that turns all our poisons into cordials ! God’s vine bears the better with bleeding. . . The same God that would not lead Israel through the Philistines’ land, lest they should shrink at the sight of war, now leads them through the wilderness, and fears not to try their patience with bitter potions. If he had not loved them, the Egyptian furnace or sword had prevented their thirst, or the sea whereof their enemies drunk dead ; and yet see how he diets them ! Never any have had so bitter draughts upon earth as those he loves best. The palate is an ill judge of the favours of God. O my Saviour, thou didst drink a more bitter cup from the hands of thy Father than that which thou refusedst of the Jews, or than that which I can drink from thee.”—BISHOP HALL.

“O Saviour, go beside us,
Wherever we may go ;
And let no harm betide us
From malice of the foe.

“O Shepherd, go beside us,
And lead thy fainting flock ;
With pastures green provide us,
And well-springs from the rock.

“Shine, Light of light, beside us,
And show the heavenly way :
Through all the future guide us,
That we no more may stray.

“O Master, stay beside us :
Our hearts with wisdom store ;
Be strength and grace supplied us,
To grow for evermore.

“O Father, go beside us
Till all our wand'rings end :
Let weal nor woe divide us
From thee, our faithful Friend.”

JOSHUA STEGMANN (1588).
Translated by James Stallybrass.

THE GOD OF CONSOLATION :

MANIFESTED IN THE EXODUS AND IN THE WILDERNESS.

THERE is no portion of man's history, as preserved in the sacred records, in which we do not see the footsteps of God as the God of all comfort, at once "Light" and "Love," the God of judgment and the God of mercy. But passing by nearly twenty long centuries after the translation of Enoch, we select one great event, or series of events, by which all after-ages have been affected and shaped, to set forth some of those attributes of the Divine character the study of which is a perennial joy to the people of God.

The outline of the history of the exodus of Israel from Egypt, and of the forty years' pilgrimage in the wilderness, is well known, and needs no rehearsal. On the very threshold of it we meet this idea: "God is faithful." On occasion of a solemn sacrifice which Abram offered to God, we are told that "when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him. And God said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them [shall be enslaved to them]; and they shall afflict them four hundred

years; and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance."* By faith Joseph, the great-grandson of Abraham, when he was dying, made mention of this promised departing of the children of Israel, and "gave commandment concerning his bones." He took an oath of those who surrounded his dying couch that they would not bury or leave his remains in Egypt; saying to them, "God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence." Accordingly, when he died, his brethren embalmed him, and put the embalmed corpse in a coffin, to be ready when the hour of departure came. But, before that hour arrived, the condition of Israel became apparently hopeless. Under a new dynasty, on which the memory of Joseph's services had no claim, the descendants of Jacob were enslaved and oppressed. For a long period, every change in their condition was for the worse, till, in despair and unbelief, Israel might say, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me;" "My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God." It seemed even so. The horror of great darkness which fell upon Abram in his trance was now become a reality in the bitter experience of his children. In vain they sighed by reason of their bondage; in vain they cried: there seemed to be no response from heaven or earth.

But "unbelief is sure to err, and scan His work in vain." The God of Abraham had not forgotten

* Gen. xv. 12-14.

his promise. All these four hundred years his eye had not once lost sight of Abraham's children. His ear was open to all their cries, and his hand ready to perform his good word. Addressing Moses out of the burning bush, he said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey." At the very time when the darkness was the thickest and the helplessness of the people the most extreme, forty years after that single ray of light which shone on the people, when the reputed son of Pharaoh's daughter espoused and avenged the cause of an injured Israelite, was quenched by his flight and exile, God remembered—having never forgotten—his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob; and it is written, after the manner of men, that "God looked upon the children of Israel, and had respect unto them."

This is a lesson for all times and for every child of God: "God is faithful." Not one good thing promised by him fails to be accomplished. Ages may come between the promise and its fulfilment; but a thousand years are with the Lord as one day; and the sun shall not cast its shadow on the dial-plate one hour beyond the appointed time without the promise being fulfilled. "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do

it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me." *

This is a truth, we say, for every child of God, and that in all possible circumstances. It is of infinite condescension that God puts himself into the position of a promiser; but having freely and condescendingly put himself in that position, he holds himself bound to fulfil. "He cannot lie." "Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations." † The desolation and afflictiveness of our circumstances may be more than words can describe: lover and friend may have forsaken us; the darkness of death may be our associate; our feet may have sunk into miry clay, and wave upon wave may roll over us; and the evil spirit of unbelief may whisper, "Where is now thy God? if he delight in thee let him deliver thee." But God seeth, God knoweth all; and his word will stand. "As thy day, so shall thy strength be. I will never leave thee. My grace is sufficient for thee." And thus assured of the Divine faithfulness, the sufferer will not charge God foolishly. Though deliverance tarry, yet will he wait for it. And to the world's amazement, he will utter what to him are not words of

* Numb. xxiii. 19; Isaiah xlix. 15, 16.

† Deut. vii. 9.

enthusiasm, but of soberness: "Yea, though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

We are met at the very commencement of the history of the exodus, and throughout the whole of it, with another principle of equal importance to our comfort, that with God all things are possible. We are assured not only of his good-will to perform all that he has promised, but of his power also.

The difficulties in the way of Israel's escape from Egypt were great and many. Pharaoh was as mighty as he was despotic. His control over the nation of bondsmen which had grown up in the midst of his people was supreme and absolute. And the services which these aliens were required to perform rendered their presence in the land not less desirable to his subjects than to himself. Those massive structures on whose erection the Pharaohs were so intent, and which required an enormous expenditure of human labour, rendered their work of too much account to be thrown away or surrendered at the instance of any human entreaty or power. "It was a point of national honour with the Egyptian despots," we are told, "to execute their huge monuments and edifices by foreign workmen; and on one of the great temples which the great conqueror Sesostris erected he ordered the inscription to be conspicuously engraved, 'No native Egyptian has been employed in constructing this building.'"

The interests, or supposed interests of the whole nation, the governed as well as the governing, were thus involved in the presence and bondage of Israel.

In any circumstances, we find that it is a matter of great difficulty to induce a people to manumit their slaves. "The sacrifice is one which demands so much self-denial that it is only after a long and, sometimes, fierce struggle that an end is put to this unnatural mastery of one portion of humanity over another. And if, as exemplified even in modern instances, it requires strong and well-sustained efforts to emancipate a population reduced to vassalage or serfdom, the difficulties, assuredly, were not less, but incomparably greater, in connection with the liberation of the Israelites from the thralldom of the Egyptians."

The difficulty was increased by the moral condition of the Israelites themselves. "The state of mind invariably engendered by slavery, and which is utterly subversive of all noble aspirations, was, in their case, greatly aggravated, no doubt, by the character of the country, the fruitfulness of the soil furnishing a ready supply to the mere animal wants. There was in the people themselves little to second the efforts of any one who meditated their deliverance. A servile spirit will risk little to recover liberty, nor submit to much inconvenience to secure it when obtained. Indeed, not only was there everything wanting in the disposition of the Israelites fitted to strengthen the hands and sustain the spirit of their deliverer, but, on the contrary, their entire frame of mind tended positively to damp the most patriotic ardour."

The difficulty was still further increased by the state of mind in which the call to enter on the work

of deliverance found Moses himself. When forty years of age, he chose rather to be a sharer of the afflictions of his brethren than to enjoy the honours and pleasures of a palace; and seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian; for he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them. "But they understood not." And the consequence of his interposition on their behalf was that he had to flee from Egypt, and seek a home among strangers in the land of Midian. There he married into the peaceful family of a priest, and we are told that "he was content to dwell with the man," and to engage in such occupations as his new position supplied. "Far removed from the struggles and disappointments of political life, he was satisfied with the quiet unambitious pursuits of a pastoral avocation, though it was no Israelitish flock he tended." And when, after forty years of separation from his people, he was called by that mysterious voice out of the burning bush to go and demand of Pharaoh the liberation of his bondsmen, he said unto God, "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" And this self-disparagement, doubtless sincere, was persisted in to a degree which indicated a sinful unbelief. All this was most natural. He who formerly ran unbidden, now refused to go when authoritatively bidden. Such is human nature; such the effect on the mind of sickening disappointments in efforts to do good to those who, instead of acknowledging them

gratefully, view with indifference and distrust the sacrifices made on their behalf.

How all these difficulties, arising out of the strength of the fetters by which the Israelites were bound, out of their prostrate and servile state of mind, and even out of the spirit of their appointed deliverer, were overcome, every Bible-reader knows. And all the facts of the story cluster around, and bear witness to, the principle that with God all things are possible. All that long series of miracles and judgments by which the gods of Egypt were proved to be vanities, and by which monarch and people were made, at least temporarily, willing that Israel should go, is recorded for our learning, that we too may believe, that as the Lord's ear is not heavy that it cannot hear, so neither is his hand shortened that it cannot save.

A lesson which, although it seems to grow out of the very fact of God's omnipotence, we find it not easy practically to learn. By Abraham it was both beautifully exemplified and singularly forgotten. In the matter of the child promised to Sarah he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, being fully persuaded that what God had promised he was able also to perform. And when his faith and obedience were put to the test by the requisition that he should offer up his only begotten son, the child of promise, and the child on whose life other promises depended for their fulfilment, he proceeded to do as he was commanded, accounting that God was able to raise up this child from the dead from whence, also,

in a figure he received him. So illustriously did his faith in God's power triumph.

But, on two other occasions, his faith failed him; once in Egypt and once in Gerar; and on both occasions he practised duplicity, or something very like it, to deliver himself from difficulty. Strange that he who had left his native country at the command of God, and followed the voice of God, not knowing whither he went, only knowing that He who had called him was able to provide for him and bless him, should imagine that his life was safe only through a virtual denial of his proper relation to Sarah. Strange that a second time, after many further proofs of the Divine power and care, his faith should again fail him, and he should again fall into the same sin. Through the greater trials of his faith he passed unhurt, giving glory to God. Passing through the lesser he contracted the only stains which now rest on his character. How was this?

The answer is to be sought, perhaps, in the very fact that these trials in Egypt and Gerar were the smaller trials of his faith. "The pebbles in our path weary us and make us footsore more than the rocks, which only require a bold effort to surmount." Great trials call into exercise all the highest and strongest principles which religion supplies, and make us sensible at the same time of our extreme need of a strength not our own. Small trials, or what seem to be such, do not make so strong and immediate a demand on the highest principles of our spiritual nature, and do not send us with the same earnestness to the throne of grace for needed strength. We

stumble and fall where we feared little danger: we are steadfast and immovable where the consciousness of great danger has aroused our whole soul to resistance, and has made us flee to the Rock that is higher than ourselves.

“With God all things are possible.” This truth, so full of comfort, we meet, embodied in fact, in the very commencement of the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt. The last link of the fetters of the captive people were broken when the destroying angel passed through the land and smote the first-born in every house. But now a new series of difficulties began, to meet and overcome which nothing was sufficient but that same power which had begun to deliver. The people were not baptized unto Moses, not redeemed from their Egyptian ruler and committed to the rule of Moses, to receive Divine laws and a Divine culture that should prepare them for their mission in Canaan, until they were placed under the cloud and had passed through the sea. And the record of that cloud and of that sea remains to us as the most effective teacher of how with God all things are possible.

On the departure of the people from the house of their bondage God did not lead them into Canaan by the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near, being the direct route, “lest peradventure,” such was the Divine reason, “the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt.” They were too effeminate, through their long-continued serfdom, to encounter, all at once, the difficulties of the conquest of Canaan. Hence they were

led through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: he took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people." But Pharaoh and his subjects could not even now brook the idea of losing their bondsmen, and pursued after them in the hope of again riveting their chains. The hearts of the pursued fainted within them, and their words showed how correctly their character was estimated when it was judged that an immediate war with the tribes of Canaan would only drive them back to Egypt. "Because there were no graves in Egypt," they said to Moses, "hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve [to be the slaves of] the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness." But even now there was nothing too hard for the Lord. The chariots and horsemen of Pharaoh were near, but nearer far was the Almighty arm. "The angel of God, which had gone before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: and it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to the pursuers, but it gave light by night to the pursued: so that the one came not near the other all the night." Under the protection of that cloud Israel was safe.

“Touch not mine anointed,” was the Divine fiat; and the horsemen of Egypt were powerless.

But something more must be done. Before Israel there lay the deep sea, and across its waves there were no means of transport. Was the Lord's hand shortened now? The great crisis of the conflict between the Redeemer and the enemies of the redeemed had come. And no words can so fitly describe the salvation which he wrought as those of his servant Moses: “Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, and took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the Lord fighteth for them against the Egyptians. And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen. And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and

the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them. But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore. And Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his servant Moses."

Thus were the people baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea. By the cloud which separated them from their enemies, more impenetrable than a wall of brass, by the sea which became a highway for them and a grave for their enemies, they were placed henceforward under the tutelage of Moses, to be instructed in the will of God, and to be disciplined for his service. And the redemption thus wrought was celebrated in strains of sublime triumph, which acknowledged that the work was all of God. "Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power. In the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee. Who is like thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? Sing ye to the Lord, for he triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea."

And in after-ages the remembrance of this mighty deliverance encouraged God's servants to hold fast their confidence that with God all things are possible, that what he has promised he is able also to perform. "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon? Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over."

The lesson was not lost upon the pious of Israel when, in an after-age, they were subject to enemies as powerful and despotic as Egypt. "Fall down and worship the golden image," was the decree of the Babylonish monarch. "And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace." There were three men who boldly disobeyed the impious command; and when challenged for their conduct, they replied, "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." "Able to deliver," they believed their God to be. Nothing too hard for him. But if, for wise reasons, he was pleased not to put forth his power, they would rather abide the consequences of disobeying the king of Babylon than sin against God.

Let us learn the lesson likewise. To sin in order to escape embarrassment and difficulty and suffering, is not to be thought of. God is able to deliver. No entanglement so perplexed but he can make a way of escape: no burden so heavy but he can sustain us under it: no furnace so hot but he can preserve us unburnt. It is written in indelible characters on the pages of that ancient story in which we are tracing his footsteps as the God of consolation, that God is faithful to his word and able to perform it. Before his power mountains become plains and seas become dry land. The Lord of hosts is his name.

Now baptized unto Moses, redeemed and separated from Egypt by the cloud and the sea, and placed under the government and instruction of the great lawgiver, how did it fare with the people? Was God still faithful and still able to fulfil his word of promise?

The first thing that strikes us is the fact, that the cloud which had proved so seasonable a guide and protector continued to serve the same ends. "God took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people." "When the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys: but if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys." Translated into the language of promise, this fact

means, "I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee." "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." "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. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom." "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." *

God with his people, with them alway, is the one blessed idea which associates itself with the record of the pillar of cloud and fire. "My presence shall go with thee," said the Lord to Moses on a particular occasion, "and I will give thee rest." And Moses said to God, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." † These things were written for our instruction and comfort. This world is too much for us without the presence of God. Its mysteries appal us, its duties burden us, its miseries sicken us, its trials crush us, if God be not with us. The one thing we need, as we advance into the unknown of every succeeding hour, is that God shall go with us. It is not necessary that our eye should see the cloud by day and the fire by night, that he should reveal himself as he did when the sea was smitten and divided, that in our furnace of suffering there should appear visibly one like unto the Son of God. But it is necessary that the Lord should be with our

* Isa. xli. 10; xliii. 2, 3; Matt. xxviii. 20.

† Exod. xxxiii. 14, 15.

spirits. The darkness and the light will be alike dangerous to us without his presence. The smoothest seas we sail over will be as hazardous as the stormiest. And well may we say, "If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence." This wilderness is no place for us without God. Every step in it is a peril, and may be death, to the most precious interests of the soul. Will God, then, in very deed go with us?

He went with Israel of old. And his church is his Israel now. The very highest character ascribed to the chosen nation, a character but partially realized by them, is claimed by an apostle for the Christian church: "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy."*

The spiritual Israel, gathered out of all nations, and constituted a people, have thus taken the place of the national Israel. Hence the duties and the promises of the national belong to the spiritual. "Dearly beloved, I beseech you," says the apostle in continuation of the words already quoted, "as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." Christians are strangers and pilgrims, redeemed from a bondage worse than Egyptian, but not yet come unto the place which the Lord their God hath promised to give them. The land of bondage is behind them, and they may join

* 1 Pet. ii. 9, 10.

Miriam and her company in saying, "Sing ye unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously." But the goodly land of which they are now the heirs is far off; and the question is, may they take to themselves all the encouragement which the promise inspires, "My presence shall go with thee"? Is there a pillar of cloud and of fire to go with them in all their journeyings?

How can we doubt it? Moses was permitted to intercede for Israel of old after the great sin of the golden calf, and to deprecate the Divine anger in these terms: "Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth?"* And on another occasion, when the Lord threatened to smite the people with a pestilence, to disinherit them, and to make of Moses a greater nation than they, he was permitted to say, "Then the Egyptians shall hear it, (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them;) and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land: for they have heard that thou Lord art among this people, that thou Lord art seen face to face, and that thy cloud standeth over them, and that thou goest before them, by day-time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night."† The successor of Moses was permitted to use a similar plea in prayer when he said, "What wilt thou do unto thy great name?"‡ And God is represented as saying to Ezekiel in reference to the redemption of his ancient people, "I wrought for my name's sake."§

* Exod. xxxii. 12. † Numb. xiv. 13, 14. ‡ Josh. vii. 9. § Ezek. xx. 9.

Now surely the Divine glory is as deeply concerned in the safe conduct of his spiritual Israel as it was in the days of old. Is it not written that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose"? "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" *

The promise, then, though old, is not obsolete. It is as true to-day, to the ransomed of the Lord who are in the wilderness on the way to Canaan, as it was three thousand years ago, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." And this presence, as enjoyed by us, is not one whit less real than it was under the shadow of Sinai.

"In the wilderness astray,
Hither, thither, while we roam,
Hungry, fainting by the way,
Far from refuge, shelter, home,"

our God and Father is with us. "Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders:" "for his mercy endureth for ever."

Leaving the shores of the Red Sea with the echoes of Miriam's triumphal and exulting song in their ears, the people of Israel travelled for three days and found no water; and when at last they came to water, they could not drink thereof, for it was bitter:

* Rom. viii. 28, 32.

therefore the name of that place was called Marah. A strange beginning this. Bondage behind them, the promised land, flowing with milk and honey, before them, and yet they march for three days and fail to find the very first essential to life and comfort, and when they do find it their wants are only mocked; the water around which they gather, with eager expectation, they cannot drink. Had we been in their place should not we have done as they did, and given way to unbelieving murmurs?

But let us mark this fact: it was the pillar of cloud and of fire that led them all these three days, and that led them to the waters of Marah. In other words, it was God himself that led them there. They had made no mistake, for they had followed Divine guidance: and God had made no mistake; he is too wise to err. Let us not suppose that we have mistaken the leadings of Divine Providence when, following what they seemed to be, we find ourselves led into a condition of privation and suffering. Still less let us dream that our Divine Guide has led us astray. We have followed, full of hope, expecting quiet, rest, and plenty; and lo, at the end of our day's march, disappointment and sorrow. This is the Lord's doing.

And if we have patience, and will reflect, we shall find a reason. God healed the waters and they became sweet, and the people were refreshed and strengthened. He thus proved both his faithfulness and power. He gave a physical illustration of how easily he can turn the bitter into sweet, a work which he performs in every age in the experience of

every saint. He taught the people at the same time for what end he had brought them into the wilderness, even for discipline. So far was there from being error or unkindness in those three days' thirst, and in the disappointment which followed, it was the distinct carrying out of a Divine purpose. The yoke of Egypt was broken, not for the mere sake of ease and comfort to the descendants of Jacob; nor for the sake of ease and comfort were they now in the wilderness. They were called to work out a great spiritual purpose, in which not only their own posterity, but all nations of the earth, were interested; and to accomplish this purpose they must be raised, not only out of the servile, but also out of the spiritual, condition into which they had sunk in Egypt. They must rise to a true and living faith in Jehovah, the God of Abraham, and must imbibe a spirit of implicit trust and obedience. The iron of oppression which had entered into their souls was not half so deadly as the dominion of the senses under which they had fallen, and the idolatrous atmosphere which they had so long breathed, and by which their very nature was become Egyptian. And, in order to anything like a life of faith, they must be subjected to much and long-continued discipline. The evil that was in them must be often so stirred as to come to the surface in words and acts that shall reveal their corruption to themselves; and they must often be brought into such difficulties by the way as will give occasion for fresh manifestations of the faithfulness and power of Jehovah. Like a wise Father, he began his work

of correction and spiritual training with the very beginning of their wilderness life. And their distance from the sweet waters of the Nile and from the flesh-pots of Egypt, felt so severely, was meant for a blessing and not for a curse. The Lord "proved them" at Marah.

This is a matter of modern and universal concernment. It is a great consolation to know that it is for purposes of discipline we have to sojourn in the wilderness and to encounter its privations and sorrows. Paradise, we have seen, was no place for fallen man. What Adam needed when he fell was not a garden of delights, but a world of sorrows; not the perpetual fellowship of flowers, but the conflict with briars and thorns. While it was offended Justice that drove him from his primeval home, Mercy herself rejoiced that the bare and sunburnt common of the outer world was more fitted to do the fallen spirit good than the sacred enclosure of paradise. So with Israel. Let their fetters be broken and the yoke of Egypt be removed from their shoulder, the land of Goshen, with its natural riches and its perpetual sunshine, was not the place where they could be raised out of their low spiritual estate and fitted for their mission in Canaan. The peninsula of Sinai, with its alternate Marahs and Elims, with its natural grandeur and its natural deserts, was the very place to bring them into near fellowship with God, to produce a deep sense of their dependence on him, and to awaken the daily and hourly consciousness of his rule over them. Painful as the process was, had they understood and ap-

preciated it, it would have been a perpetual joy to them that, for their highest good, they were now subjected to the dangers and inconveniences of the wilderness.

For similar ends have we to travel through a wilderness. The hour of our redemption from the yoke of sin might be made the hour of our investiture with our heavenly inheritance. And in the case of some it is. Between their conversion on earth and their glory in heaven there is no long interval of spiritual warfare and training. But ordinarily it is otherwise. God takes his people to himself not by the nearest way, but, as in the case of Israel, by the sea and the desert. And along the far-winding path which they have to pursue they meet with many difficulties by reason of which their souls are often discouraged. But let them remember this, let the history of Israel teach them, that for their own good, to discipline their own hearts, to destroy their lusts, and to ripen their graces, has their Redeemer ordained for them this long and painful journey. Their lot in the heavenly inheritance is prepared for them, but they must be prepared for it. And this is the way. Whatever other ways we might fancy to be suitable to the same end, this is the way the Lord hath chosen. And it is the right way. Every time we go down into a vale of tears, lie prostrate on a bed of sickness, or stand desolate by the open grave, let us know that not only hath nothing that is not common to man's lot befallen us, but that all this has been appointed our lot by a wisdom which cannot err, and by a love which

has already given the highest pledge of its kindness in redeeming us from bondage. In the fact that our wilderness journey is one great discipline, God stands forth before us revealed as the God of consolation.

If we could follow the children of Israel through every stage of their forty years' pilgrimage we should find similar revelations of the Divine character. Immediately after the bitter waters of Marah come the sweet waters of Elim, an oasis with its three-score and ten palm-trees. God does not lay on his people more than they are able to bear. "He stayeth his rough wind in the day of his east wind." Or, in the words of an English proverb, "He tempers the wind to the shorn lamb." Winter alternates with summer, and the storm with the calm.

The children of Israel took their journey from Elim, and had not gone far when they murmured against Moses and Aaron, and said, "Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh-pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger." God not only bore with this murmuring, but "rained bread from heaven upon them," and supplied their wants by miracle.

Before reaching Sinai the people murmured again, and said, "Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?" All that they had seen and experienced of the Divine faithfulness and power had

not taught them to trust in God and to wait upon him for what they needed. But he wrought for his own name's sake: their extremity was his opportunity. The smitten rock, the unlikeliest of fountains, poured forth a copious supply, which "ran," according to the Psalmist, "in the dry places like a river." * How far and how long the waters from the rock "ran in dry places like a river," we cannot say, but possibly for seven-and-thirty years. Descending from Horeb, the waters would flow eastward towards the eastern branch of the Red Sea, not far from Ezion-geber; and it was only when, at the end of seven-and-thirty years, the people removed from those parts towards the country of Edom, that they were again distressed by the want of water. It was not a thing too hard for the Lord to keep that rock in Horeb open, and to prolong the miracle for all these years; so that, together with the daily supply of manna, this drink, spiritually or miraculously supplied, should be an unceasing proof to the people of the mercy and grace of their God, and a symbol of their dependence upon him. This would account for the saying that "the rock followed them." Its waters followed them, and they found in the desert that without which the desert could have been only their grave. And that we may find in these facts comfort for our pilgrimage it is written, "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys:

* Ps. cv. 41.

I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water." *

It remains only to say that, often as it was needful for God to lift up his hand against his people in the wilderness, and to smite them with sore judgments because of their disobedience and unbelief, "he remembered his holy promise, and gave them the lands of the heathen; that there they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws." † "There failed not aught of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass." Praise ye the Lord.

"Children of the heavenly King,
As ye journey sweetly sing;
Sing your Saviour's worthy praise,
Glorious in his works and ways.

"We are travelling home to God,
In the way the fathers trod:
They are happy now, and we
Soon their happiness shall see.

"Shout, ye ransomed flock, and blest:
You on Jesus' throne shall rest;
There your seat is now prepared,
There your kingdom and reward.

"Fear not, brethren: joyful stand
On the borders of our land.
Jesus, God's exalted Son,
Bids us undismayed go on.

"Onward, then, we gladly press
Through this earthly wilderness:
Only, Lord, our Leader be,
And we still will follow thee."

* Isa. xli. 17, 18.

† Josh. xxi. 45.

CHAPTER V.

THE GOD OF CONSOLATION:

MANIFESTED IN THE WORKS OF JESUS CHRIST.

CONTENTS.—The God of consolation incarnate—Christ was love—Calvary—Comfort in the fact of the incarnation—Miracles wrought on common occasions—Their benevolence—No exception—Raising of Lazarus—Storm quelled—Speciality of providence—“Himself took our infirmities”—The pledge of physical as well as spiritual incorruption—Verses by Dr. George Wilson.

“The miracles of the gospel are not isolated facts; they are not vain repetitions. In meaning, as well as in time, they lie between the Incarnation and the Ascension. They look back to the one event and forward to the other, now bringing God to man and now raising man to God, as signs of the full accomplishment of Christ's earthly work. . . . The first miracle of Moses after his work began was a turning of water into blood: . . . the first miracle of Christ was a changing of water into wine. . . . There the Lord of hosts stands pre-eminent over the gods of the heathen, answering by fire: here the Saviour brings the fulness of blessing out of a disordered world. . . . The Gospel miracles of healing are presented to us as a revelation of hope, of restoration, of forgiveness; of hope as wrought in an age of signal distress, of restoration in the universality of their extent, of forgiveness in the spiritual antitypes of their working. And if we take this larger view of their essential nature, I do not see how we can conceive of the action of a Divine Saviour without such deeds of love.”—B. F. WESTCOTT.

**“Hail to the Lord’s anointed,
Great David’s greater Son!
Hail, in the time appointed,
His reign on earth begun!
He comes to break oppression;
To set the captive free;
To take away transgression,
And rule in equity.**

**“He shall come down like showers
Upon the fruitful earth;
And love, joy, hope, like flowers,
Spring in his path to birth.
Before him, on the mountains,
Shall peace, the herald, go;
And righteousness, in fountains,
From hill to valley flow.**

**“He comes with succour speedy
For those who suffer wrong;
To help the poor and needy,
And bid the weak be strong;
To give them songs for sighing,
Their darkness turn to light,
Whose souls, condemned and dying,
Were precious in his sight.**

**“By such shall he be feared
While sun and moon endure,
Beloved, obeyed, revered;
For he shall judge the poor,
Through changing generations,
With justice, mercy, truth,
While stars maintain their stations
Or moons renew their youth.”**

JAMES MONTGOMERY.

THE GOD OF CONSOLATION :

MANIFESTED IN THE WORKS OF JESUS CHRIST.

“THE Spirit of the Lord is upon me,” said Jesus Christ in the synagogue of Nazareth, telling his fellow-townsmen that on that day the prophet’s words were fulfilled—“the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” The God of consolation was now incarnate. The light and love of his character shone forth as they had never done before even in the most significant words and actions of the seers of other ages. The glory of the only begotten of the Father was radiant with grace and truth. In his personal life, as in his mediatorial work, mercy and righteousness were so blended as to form in their union the perfection of beauty. “In him met the whole constellation of virtues, each one made brighter by contrast; but one overpowering sentiment softened and subjected them all to itself; one all-pervading law gave unity and harmony to his most opposite actions, interpreting all his words and looks; and that sentiment, that law, was LOVE.”

The words in which our Lord's advent was announced to the shepherds of Bethlehem were these: "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." It was only in heralding a "Saviour" that the multitude of the heavenly host could sing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men." To understand all the love which this song foreshadowed, we must go with Christ to Gethsemane and Calvary, and witness the travail of his soul in making atonement for human guilt. Only then shall we fully know what is meant by the declaration, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and gave his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." And without this propitiation, the work of Divine love for the vindication of the Divine law, no child of man could enter into such relations with God as to be able to love him and confide in him as his Father. The death which the Saviour endured on the cross must thus be held to be the greatest manifestation of his character as the God of consolation. Not only do all others become dim when compared with this, but all others depend on this for their very existence. The purpose to atone and redeem lay at the foundation of every word of comfort which was addressed to fallen man from the foundation of the world.

But it is not on Calvary alone that we see the

Divine name as the God of all comfort revealed in Christ. It is revealed in all the words and works of the Saviour; and it is with these we have to do chiefly at present.

Let us look first at his works, his miracles. The chief miracle of the gospel is the Incarnation. That, being incarnate, the Son of God should have worked as he did, was to have been expected. It would have been a wonder if he had not. "The sun in the heavens is itself a wonder, but not that, being what it is, it rays forth its effluences of light and heat." Even so with the Incarnate One, the Lord from heaven. His name was "Wonderful," and his mighty works were only outshining rays of his own glory.

To some there is comfort, and a comfort they much need, in the assurance which the life of Christ gives them of a power, a personal power, to which nature and all natural laws are subject. They know, it is true, that the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth forth his handiwork; that day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge concerning him. Napoleon on the deck of his frigate in the Mediterranean, sailing homewards from Egypt, uttered only the general sentiment of humanity when he silenced the Atheism of his officers by turning his face towards the stars, and asking, "Who made these?" But still none of the human senses ever bears direct testimony to God: we have not heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. "Neither telescope searching amongst the stars, nor microscope searching among the atoms, ever discovers

him. Everywhere we encounter the shining footprints, but nowhere do we catch a glimpse of the glowing feet." And through our bondage to the senses, the orderly workings of nature, while they are meant to reveal the glory of God, often serve only to hide that glory from our eyes. They ought to make us continually to remember him; yet there is danger that they lead us to forget him, until this world around us shall prove "not a medium through which we behold him, but an impenetrable veil concealing him wholly from our sight."

Were there then no other purpose served by the miracles of our Lord than to bear witness to a God who, while he works in nature, is more than and over nature; did they only break one link of the chain of natural cause and effect, so that we shall not regard that chain as a necessity which binds heaven no less than earth—they would not have been wrought in vain; they would bring comfort to many weary spirits in their search after God. While no man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son hath declared him in works which prove that nature is not self-governed, but is subject to a will which, while it chooses for wise reasons to work ordinarily through what we call laws, is yet independent of these laws, in fact is the will of a Divine Being in whom and by whom all things consist.

There may be many who do not need the consolation of this thought; but all can appreciate the consolation which flows from the fact that the miracles of Christ, thus revealing God, touched our human life,

so to speak, at every point. They were wrought not only on what might be considered great occasions and emergencies, such as a storm threatening destruction, but on common occasions, such as a Galilean marriage feast. And the latter is perhaps even more encouraging and comforting than the former. When Jesus honoured the beginning of domestic life with the beginning of the showing forth of his possession of Divine power, by supplying the means wherewith to celebrate the festive occasion, he taught men to look upon God as connected with "the habitual course and current of their life." The same lesson was taught when our Lord met his apostles in their daily avocations as fishermen, and by his supernatural power blessed their means of livelihood. Christ put forth his Divine power not only to raise the dead, but to remove a common fever. So closely did he associate himself with our daily existence, that he wrought one of his miracles in connection with what we may call the artificial duties of life: he caused a fish to bring him the tribute-money that was demanded of him and his followers.

In all this we are taught that God is ever near at hand; that he is to be met with, and his blessing to be enjoyed, in every action of life and at every spot of the creation. "Religion is thus seen to be a thing of every-day life, affording guidance and help to all, suited to every difficulty, every human feeling, every desire; a book—

"Which he may read that binds the sheaf,
Or builds the house, or digs the grave."

This is a great comfort to us. The greater part of

our duties and burdens and cares and trials are what may be called small duties, small burdens, small cares, small trials. Even as our years are made up of days and our days of hours, so our life is made up of minute thoughts, and labours, and afflictions. And except when some unusual work has to be done, or some unusual burden to be borne, we are singularly prone to disconnect God from our life, and thus to lose the salutary stimulus which the sense of his presence would give us in our every-day undertakings, and the soothing comfort which it would give us in our every-day cares. The history of Christ's works while on earth should correct this proneness. It reveals the Saviour not only in personal human contact with all that is common and ordinary in man's duties and sorrows, but also as putting forth the power of the Godhead in connection with it; and while nature has long resumed and followed her course, uninterrupted by supernatural agency, the precious record remains that, when her God was pleased to appear on earth in human form, he was observant of the commonplaces as well as the crises of our existence. His miracles are rich in evidence that the Lord of glory knows our downsitting and our uprising, compasses our paths and our lying down, and concerns himself lovingly with all our ways.

There is one broad characteristic of Christ's miracles which makes them a fit manifestation of God as the God of all comfort, and that is their benevolence. "Had he only intended to produce impressions of his majesty, or to prove the Divinity of his mission, he might, perhaps, have accomplished this sooner by

appealing to our fears in miracles of terror and destruction. But the object he aimed at, and the truths he taught, were both of a benevolent nature. And the miracles he performed in confirmation of these truths partook of the same character. He refused but one application to his miraculous power, when his disciples rashly desired that fire might descend from heaven on their enemies. On the night of his apprehension he touched the wound of an enemy and healed it; for, with him, power and kindness were the same thing. Wherever he came, disease and suffering fled from his presence. His path might be traced from place to place in lines of life, and health, and joy. Where he was expected, the public way was thronged with forms of helplessness, disease, and woe. Where he had passed, the restored might be seen making trial of their new-found powers, and listeners formed into groups to hear the tale of healing. His voice was the first sound which many of them heard, his name the first word they had pronounced, his blessed form the first sight they had ever beheld. And often, at the close of a laborious day, when his wearied frame required repose, the children of affliction besieged his retreat and implored his help. And did they ever seek in vain? Wearied and worn as he was, 'he pleased not himself;' he went forth and patiently listened to all their tales of woe, sympathized in their several complaints, raised each suppliant from the dust, nor left them till he had absorbed their sufferings and healed them all."

The exceptions to the general character of his

miracles are only seeming. When he cursed the fig-tree, he inflicted no pain and wounded no sensibility, while he taught a solemn lesson. If it be objected that he should have put forth his anger on a tree, the real meaning of the objection, in many minds, often is, says the Archbishop of Dublin, "that he should put forth his anger at all; that God should ever show himself as a punishing God; that there should be any such thing as the wrath of the Lamb, as a day of doom. But seeing that such things are, how needful that men should not forget it: yet they might have forgot it so far as the teaching of the miracles went, but for this one; all the others being miracles of help and of healing. And even the severity of this, with what mercy was it tempered! Christ did not, like Moses and Elijah, make the assertion of God's holiness and his hatred of evil at the cost of many lives, but only at the cost of a single unfeeling tree. His miracles of mercy were unnumbered, and for men: his miracle of judgment was but one, and on a tree."

Nor can the destruction of the swine of the Gadarenes be regarded as a real exception to the general character of Christ's miracles. If Christ did mean to remind the world by such an incident of the background of righteousness and judgment which is inseparable from his mercy and love, the intention was kind and gracious. But the destruction of the swine was not in itself a miracle, it was but incidental to a miracle, and that one of the most illustrious of all our Lord's works. "A man is of more value than many swine. And if this granting of the evil

spirits' request helped in any way the cure of the man, caused them to release their hold on him more easily, mitigated the paroxysm of their going forth, this," says the Archbishop of Dublin, "would have been motive enough. Or, still more probably, it may have been necessary for the permanent healing of the man that he should have an outward evidence and testimony that the hellish powers which held him in bondage had quitted their hold. He wanted his deliverance sealed and realized to him in the open destruction of his enemies: not else would he have been persuaded of the truth of that deliverance, and that Christ had indeed and for ever set him free; as the children of Israel, coming out of Egypt, must see the dead bodies of their oppressors on the shore ere they could indeed believe that these never again should bring them back into their old bondage."

But it is not the mere fact that our Lord's miracles were uniformly benevolent in their character that reveals to us the God of consolation. Would we understand all their fitness and power to assure us of the love of God to us in what we regard as his ordinary providence, we must read and ponder them separately and in all their details. Comforting as it is to know that Christ had compassion on the multitudes, and healed all who came to him, it is only when we draw near to observe how he deals with individual cases that we realize all their fulness of consolation and strength. The one history of the raising of Lazarus is worth a thousand general statements. Tell us that by his word he saved a city

from sinking into a gulf opened by an earthquake, and you do not so impress us with the Saviour's grace and tenderness as do the varied incidents and minute touches of the record of this one miracle. The tears that were shed by the grave of Lazarus are worth more than words can tell—

“When sorrowing o'er some stone we bend
Which covers what was once a friend,
And from his hand, his voice, his smile,
Divides us for a little while.”

In reading the narrative, we become present to the whole scene. The very tones of the voices, both of the mourners and of their Divine Comforter, become audible. We go with Martha to meet Jesus as he approaches the town, and hear her pouring her sorrows into his ear; or sit still with Mary in the house awaiting his arrival, till she is awakened out of her reverie by her sister's voice: “The Master is come, and calleth for thee.” The words of the sisters are so natural that we readily imagine them our own words. And the response of the Saviour has a Divine sublimity and a human tenderness in it which make us feel that it was meant, not for them alone, but for us also who believe in his name: “I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.”

Even miracles of which not the human person, but the outer world, was the subject, have, when thus studied, the power to impart vivid conceptions of the Divine character as the God of consolation. It was not for the sake of the life of those alone who were

crossing the Sea of Galilee with him, that Jesus arose out of his quiet and unfearing slumber, and rebuked the winds and the sea, so that the tempest was lulled into a great calm. Nor was it for the sake of his then disciples alone that Jesus, when walking on the sea, said to those who were in the ship tossed with the waves, “Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.”*

The heart interprets these narratives for itself, and does them no violence when it sees in them a sign of the providence which governs the storms of human life. We, who write and who read, are all “in the midst of the sea,” some a few, some many miles out from the shore; and oftentimes the wind is very contrary, so that we are covered with the waves. But assure us that there is One to whom winds and waves are subject, make this palpable, as it were, to our senses, and we too shall be of good cheer. The storm cannot overwhelm us so long as it is directed and restrained by the hand of Christ, nor should it alarm us so long as we know that he is himself with us. This is the lesson of comfort which the record of Christ’s power over the waves of the Sea of Galilee has bequeathed us.

There is another most comforting lesson taught us by the details which are preserved respecting our Lord’s mighty works, and that is the speciality of Divine providence. This doctrine was taught by his words in a form never to be forgotten; a form more impressive far than the closest philosophic reasoning

* Matt. xiv. 27.

could make it. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on 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." * "Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have store-house nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls? And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to-day in the field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things."

Doth not nature itself teach you, Christ said in effect, the doctrine of a special providence, the doctrine that providence extends its watchful care and government to the minutest concerns of life? And the more we study nature, the more shall we be satisfied that Christ interpreted its lessons rightly. Its smallest creations are fraught with proofs of the same Divine power and wisdom which shine in the creation of suns and stars.

* Matt. x. 29-31.

But Christ has given demonstration of the same blessed truth in another way. His *miracles* prove and illustrate the speciality of Divine providence. The particulars which are recorded concerning them help us to realize not only the love which distinguished them, but also the speciality of that interest which every one may seek in the Divine love. We cannot read how the centurion pleaded for his servant, or Jairus for his little daughter, or the Syrophenician woman for her daughter, Canaanite though she was, or a father for his afflicted son whom the disciples could not heal; or how a woman who thought so meanly of herself that she would hide herself in the crowd, and yet thought so highly of Jesus that she believed she should be healed if she only touched the hem of his garment, obtained the blessing she sought—without feeling that we too may, without presumption, commit our cases and our cares to the providence of our heavenly Father. The miracles on which we look with so much awe, and which radiated forth from that chief and central miracle, the Incarnation of the Son of God, are thus full of evidence that God cares for the humblest of his children. When the mighty God was on earth in the form of man, and gave visible demonstration that he held the reins of the world's government in his hands, and that nature's laws were but his servants, he did not concern himself with men and events considered great, and pass by men of low estate and things of little moment. When entering the city of Nain, and the city of Jericho, he was not in haste to salute and offer his beneficent services to their chief

rabbi or their chief magistrate. But in the one case he stopped a funeral procession, and restored to a weeping mother her only child, who was being carried to the grave; and in the other, he allowed himself to be stopped by the cry of a blind beggar, and wrought on that poor mendicant one of his mightiest works. Now these things are written for our learning, that we, through comfort of the Scripture, may have this hope, that we are not too mean, nor our affairs too mean, to enjoy the watchful love of Him who is Lord of all. The extraordinary providence which visited and blessed Judea when the Son of God dwelt in it as the Son of man, is a mirror in which we may see reflected the character of that ordinary providence which the Son of man, now glorified, exercises over the world which he has redeemed. And what time our own hearts are overwhelmed within us,—

“When gathering clouds around we view,
And days are dark and friends are few,”

pining in solitude, sinking under disease, and forsaken of men, let us turn to the earthly life of the Incarnate One, and we shall hear from human lips the voice which said many ages before, “I have seen the affliction of my people: I know their sorrows.”

Even this does not exhaust the significance of the testimony which the works of Christ bear to the relation in which God stands to us as the God of consolation. He healed, we are told, all manner of disease among the people, and all manner of sickness. Now, considering the large portion of

human affliction which consists of sickness and disease and their consequences, it is a great consolation to observe the compassion these excited in Christ's heart, and the extent to which his hand was stretched forth to remove them. The character which the God of Israel claimed of old, when he said, "I am Jehovah that healeth thee," was the character in which Jesus Christ stood forth so prominently in the days of his flesh. He is the "Healer" still; and our prayer may ascend to him now for restoration and health. It is as true in these days as ever it was that, "if he wills, he can" deliver us from disease and death. And we may follow, though with no expectation of a miraculous cure, the example of those who crowded around Christ's person and door, to seek for ourselves and others all the blessings we need.

But this is not all. There is a peculiar significance in the form in which his interest in our diseases and his compassion towards them are stated. "He cast out the spirits with his word," we are told, "and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." * "He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows," is our translation of the words in the fifty-third of Isaiah. But the difference between the two is immaterial. "Griefs" may be more comprehensive than "infirmities," and "sorrows" than "sickness," but the one is inclusive of the other. The use which Matthew makes of the passage cannot

* Matt. viii. 16.

be said to be more than a part, and perhaps the least part, of the fulfilment of the prophet's saying. But it is a part, and one of no small interest. Our Lord, in becoming the substitute of guilty men, took upon him not only their sins, but their sicknesses. These sicknesses are the fruits of sin. And when he healed them it was not merely in the capacity of a mighty and loving Friend, but as one who had made them his own by the peculiar relation into which he had voluntarily brought himself towards man.

Every single cure effected by Christ was an act of redemption from some fruit of sin; and the Redeemer performed it as one who had taken on himself, so to speak, the burden of a complete moral and physical redemption. It is true that we do not yet see all this redemption accomplished. But in the Saviour's miracles we have examples of it; and each of these is a pledge and a prophecy of the final and perfect fulfilment of all that he has undertaken. Every cure he wrought gave assurance that this corruptible shall put on incorruption. Every grave he opened and every life he restored was a pledge that death shall be abolished and swallowed up in victory. His miracles were attestations of his Divine mission and proofs of his Divine love, but they were likewise parts of his Divine redemption, and, as such, earnest of its completion when disease and death will be as unknown as sin itself.

This, then, is the consolation we derive from the manner in which Matthew connects our Lord's miracles with his vicarious character as our substitute and Redeemer. He was Jehovah the Healer,

because he was Jehovah the Saviour. It could not be said even of the most loving of the apostles when curing the lame or the blind, "Himself took our infirmities, and carried our sicknesses," any more than it could be said of him, "The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed." Both were the prerogatives of Jesus Christ. And we see in his miracles more than sympathy with human suffering, and more than power to remove it: we see in them the beginning of our redemption from frailty and mortality. If for disciplinary purposes, and as a memento of our fallen condition, infirmity and sickness continue to afflict pardoned and sanctified Christians, they are destined to give place to immortal health and life. This we know, because Christ "himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses," and "he will not fail nor be discouraged" till he hath accomplished all that he hath undertaken. When disease prostrates and pain racks our bodies, be this our joy, that it is only for a season, for our disease and pain are parts of the burden which Christ took upon himself; and meanwhile he will not only strengthen us to bear them, but will use them to prepare us for the world where we shall need chastisement and discipline no more.

The God who is revealed to us in the works of Jesus Christ is in very deed the God of all comfort. The miracles of the gospel "place before us that which is fact for every various mind and life that will receive it; the presence of Him who helps and guides us each and all; Jesus Christ, both God and man.

We know that when we see him, tears, and all that tears have flowed for, will depart.”

“Sufferer, lift thy weary eye !
Help is with thee ; Christ is nigh ;
God regards thee from on high.

“ All thy groans go up as prayers,
Through the Spirit’s interceding.
Each unworded murmur wears
At God’s throne the air of pleading ;
And in all thy woes he shares,
Who was once the Victim bleeding.

“ Though he is and was all sinless,
He remembers mortal pain ;
Holy though he is, and stainless,
On his form the scars remain ;
And he looketh now, though painless,
Like a lamb that has been slain.

“ All thy bed in all thy sickness
He will make with his kind hands.
All thy fainting, fears, and weakness,
Anxious thoughts and fond demands,
All thy patience, faith, and meekness,
Reach him where on high he stands.

“ Faint not, then : God ever listeneth,
Answereth ere the cry is sent ;
Whom he loveth, those he chasteneth,
Taketh what he only lent ;
For himself our ripening hasteneth
By his sorest punishment.”

CHAPTER VI.

THE GOD OF CONSOLATION :

MANIFESTED IN THE WORDS OF JESUS CHRIST.

CONTENTS.—“The tongue of the learned”—Possessed by Christ—Who will show us any good?—Christ’s answer—The Beatitudes—The parables—Some of judgment, but from a heart of love—Parables of mercy—Bearing of Christ’s teaching on the cares and anxieties of life—Christ identifying himself with his disciples—The good Shepherd: illustrations from Eastern manners—The Resurrection and the Life—The philosophers of Athens and the African chief—By faith we understand that the dead shall rise—Verses by Montgomery.

“He held the heart of the world in his hand; and, knowing the secret of all its sympathies, he communed with its weakness and sorrows by methods peculiarly his own. Sorrow was, in his eyes, among the most sacred things he found on earth; and had it not been so before, the reverent attention with which he honoured it, and the simple and sympathetic terms in which he addressed it, would have made it hallowed. He knew also that the time of affliction would be the season when numbers would first direct a look to the gospel for relief; when help, if it came to them at all, must come without effort; when the staff must not only be provided, but actually put into their hand. And knowing this, he published his gospel as a system of consolation for the miserable; and they who know it best are the readiest to confess how fully it answers to the character: after the trial of ages it maintains its prerogative of binding up the broken in heart.”—JOHN HARRIS, D.D.

“Jesus, elder Brother, hear !
To thee I lift mine eye.
Sorrows reach thy listening ear,
And move thee throned on high ;
Touch thy tender human heart,
Where our names are all engraved,
Sharers of the better part,
Though once by sin enslaved.

“Jesus, elder Brother, hear !
To thee my griefs are known :
All my sadness thou wilt cheer,
Remembering thine own.
Yet our sorrows we must bring,
Suppliant mourners, to thy feet ;
Craving help as from a King
Upon his mercy-seat.

“Jesus, elder Brother, hear
A bruised sinner's prayer !
Wash my stains, dispel my fear,
Lift off my load of care ;
Fill my soul with thoughtful love,
Satan's work therein destroy ;
Light my pathway from above,
And be my heaven of joy !”

JAMES MACKAY, B.D.

THE GOD OF CONSOLATION :

MANIFESTED IN THE WORDS OF JESUS CHRIST.

“THE Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.” * In these terms the Messiah described his work and mission ages before his incarnation. And when he appeared in the world in the form of man, he found it very “weary” and very wicked. Men had multiplied their gods as the stars of heaven, but they had thereby only multiplied their sorrows. They had followed cunningly devised fables, which had only dragged them deeper and deeper into the Slough of Despond. Their imaginations and devices were without number ; but disappointment had followed disappointment till “the whole head was sick, and the whole heart faint.” The world’s power, wisdom, and superstition, had all done their best ; but on that best was inscribed, “Vanity of vanities ; all is vanity.”

It was in these circumstances, when man himself had failed, totally failed, when the certainty and completeness of the failure amounted to a demonstration, that the Son of God came forth from the invisible Father to heal the broken-hearted and comfort them that mourn. And, in fulfilling his mission, he

* Isa. l. 4.

possessed the tongue not only of love, but of wisdom, "the tongue of the learned," and was not only prompted by compassion to comfort the weary, but knew how to do it in the best and wisest way.

Many of his most cheering words were uttered in connection with his miracles, and to these we shall not advert further. Nor will it be possible to enlarge on particular sayings which shine as bright particular stars even where the whole groundwork of his speech is light and brightness: we must confine ourselves to some general views of his teaching as the Comforter of the "weary."

The Sermon on the Mount is a remarkable illustration of the wisdom of our Lord as a Comforter. The Beatitudes with which it begins may be regarded as his answer to the old question, "Who will show us any good?" a question still echoed in every language under heaven; coming to us on the wings of every wind; asked by all classes, the most mirthful as well as the most sorrowful, the most prosperous as well as the most depressed.

Were we to cause the answers which have been given to this question to pass in review before us, we should witness a procession of fancies and follies and fallacies enough to make us weep over the shame and degradation of our race. But Christ's answer separates itself from them all. The first thing which strikes us in it is the absence of all reference to what the world most values and most seeks after; material good, for example. Our Lord did not say, "Blessed are the rich: blessed are the possessors of broad acres and noble mansions!" He was not

indifferent to the real value of material good, nor did he look on outward possessions with the eye of a cynic. Poverty and want were no pleasures to him, but privations. And though he wrought no miracle to provide for himself, he did to provide for others. More than this. Taking in the whole view of his being, we know that all the material good in the universe is his creation and gift. Paradise was his workmanship. The heavens with sun, moon, and stars, the earth with its many products, were all his, and, at their creation, he saw and declared them to be good.

Now it is for us a most important and instructive fact, that He, whose is the world and the fulness thereof, did not when on earth pronounce the man blessed who possesses much of the world's wealth. He knew unerringly what was in man and what was in the world, and how far the one could meet the wants of the other; and with all this unerring knowledge he turned man's thoughts quite away from the world, in a direction in which it had not entered into their hearts to conceive it possible that happiness should be found.

Nor did he pronounce his benediction on the possession of power, that gift most coveted, and never more so than by the Jews in the time of our Lord. The children of Abraham were then in bondage, though their pride would fain deny it; and they associated almost all good with the hope of becoming the masters of those whose servants they were. They longed for a Messiah to break the yoke of Rome, and to lead them to conquest and dominion

over the nations. But these notions and hopes received no sanction from the words of Christ. Himself over all, and having all power in heaven and earth, he did not say, "Blessed are the mighty." Not in that direction did he teach men to look for an answer to the question, "Who will show us any good?"

Nor did he pronounce his benediction on the possession of intellectual gifts and acquirements. And yet who could appreciate these like Christ? To say nothing of his higher nature, there has never been a human intellect like his, so profound, so comprehensive, so perfect; an intellect whose light was never dimmed, never broken. But he did not pronounce those blessed who rise above their fellows, or are distinguished from them by their intellectual gifts or acquisitions. We may hold that these are above material possessions as the heavens are above the earth; but, alas! it often happens that he that increaseth knowledge only increaseth sorrow. We may sink our shaft as deep as did Lord Bacon, or soar as high as ever Milton soared, but we shall find neither in the depths nor in the heights the good that will satisfy the soul. The tree of knowledge is very attractive; its blossoms and its fruit are very beautiful; but it bears nothing that will satisfy the hunger of our spirits, while often, often it has proved a tree of death to those who have fed thereon.

It must ever be held a great comfort that wealth and power and knowledge are not the fountains of good; for of these fountains comparatively few can drink, and it is not the few, but the many, that are thirsting after happiness.

“Blessed,” said Christ, “are the poor in spirit;” not the mean, but the humble in spirit. “Blessed are they that mourn”—all mourners. And all mourners are blessed, not that any affliction is in itself joyous, but that there is provided for them in Christ the comfort which they need. “Blessed are the meek.” Theirs is the true enjoyment of what is good in this world, and theirs the rest which awaits the people of God in the promised land above. “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness;” for the gospel has provided a feast of which they may freely partake till they are filled. “Blessed are the merciful and the peacemakers;” for they possess a spirit which proves them to be the children of God the great Father above, a spirit which he regards with favour, and which he makes a well-spring of good.

Our Lord thus declared those blessed who were possessors, not of outward good or of intellectual good, but of moral good. The Divine favour rests on certain states of the heart: humility and its allied graces; purity, at once the fruit and evidence of a spiritual birth; and love, exhibiting itself, in mercifulness and in the temper of the peacemaker. Although man is no fountain of happiness to himself, he has to look within rather than without for the means of true enjoyment. Let his heart be brought through Divine grace into that state of humility and purity and love which will make it the image of Christ’s heart, and God will lift up upon it the light of his countenance, and thus fill it with more gladness than the men of this world possess when their corn and oil abound.

In his Sermon on the Mount, Christ did make one

reference to outward things, but it was strangely different from what men would expect: "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." He thus seized boldly on that condition of life to which his followers were sure to be subjected, and from which they would naturally recoil, and he pronounced it blessed. In so doing he took away its sting and its shame, and taught his followers that out of the eater should come forth meat, and out of the strong and the bitter should come forth sweetness. Neither the burning stake nor the reviling tongue shall be able to destroy the Christian's happiness. In the endurance of both Christ is with his people, and in spite of both he makes them happy. The applause of the ungodly is more dangerous to them than their contempt. The well-dones and plaudits with which they cheer those who stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of the scornful, are more to be dreaded than the finger of scorn, the bitter taunt, the reviling speech, with which they assail those whose delight is in the law of the Lord. He who said, "Blessed are ye, when men shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake," can and will make good his words, in which he has opened a fountain of consolation for all time.

If we advance from the Sermon on the Mount to the parables of our Lord, we shall find how full his words were of Divine consolation. There are parables of judgment, it is true; but mercy supplies even to these their ground-tone, as to the woes and other words of warning which were uttered by him. It was with weeping he said to Jerusalem, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." And it was in the spirit of the same tearful compassion that he said two days later, while standing in the temple, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." Who does not discern in all these words the tones of a yearning compassion, which would have shielded a repentant and obedient people from all the assaults of Babylon or of Rome?

The parables of judgment came from the same heart of love. Their warnings were not conceived in the spirit of one who would torment men before their time, but of one who would turn them from the error of their ways. To this class belong the parables of the wicked husbandmen, the rich fool, the barren fig-tree, and the unprofitable servants. The parables of the ten virgins, and of the rich man and Lazarus, belong to it in part; but these tell us of the saved as well as the lost, of mercy redeeming as well as of justice condemning. And in all of them we see love lifting the veil off the consequences of sin and unbelief only that men may fear and turn unto the Lord.

Other parables speak of mercy only. The great supper, the lost sheep, the prodigal son—who can read these utterances of the Divine Teacher without feeling that God is love? The last alone, fitly called the pearl and crown of all the parables, reveals to us a depth of Fatherly love in the Divine bosom which may well put to shame the self-exiled wanderers who have forsaken God; while it assures us that the Divine love is far larger and freer than we, even when most inclined to return, dare to believe. The father of the prodigal son does not wait for him till he has come all the way, but hastens to meet him. “He does not wear at first an aspect of severity, only after a season to be relaxed or laid aside, but at once welcomes him with the kiss, which is something more than an evidence of affection, being the significant, and, in the East, well-understood pledge of reconciliation and peace.”

“How many eyes have looked on this picture till they filled with tears: how many hearts have melted before it: how many penitents has it inspired with hope.”

The general bearing of Christ's words on the cares and anxieties and sorrows of life cannot be overlooked. “His teaching contemplates men labouring, restless, fevered, about the petty provisions of the present life; causing their cup of sorrow to overflow by holding it with an unsteady hand; anxiously looking onward to the future, borrowing the distresses of the morrow to aggravate those of the present day; loading themselves with burdens of grief which do not belong to them, and which they are not required to bear; and, surveying this scene of overtoiled labour and sleepless anxiety and wasting solicitude, in which mortals are embroiled, the voice of Jesus, the Friend of man, the tender Sympathizer with human woe, is heard, rising in tones of the kindest compassion, above the sighs, and plaints, and groans of the multitude, and saying, ‘Peace, be still. Mourner, dry thy tears. Ye who are laden with the self-imposed burdens of worldly care, lay down the heavy load. Ye destitute, who count yourselves outcasts of the world, for whom no one cares, know that you have a Father, and that the God of providence is he. Come, learn of me, and I will give you rest: I will allay your anxieties, and lay your hearts to rest on the bosom of that paternal providence which cares and provides for

all it has made; for everything, from the meanest herb which it feeds with the precious dews, up to the immortal soul on which it pours the immediate influences of the Divine Spirit.' ”

There is another aspect of Christ's teaching as it bears on our suffering earthly condition which is affectionately tender and comforting, and that is the manner in which he identifies himself with his people. Taking a child by his side on one occasion, he said to his disciples, “ Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me.”* And on another occasion he said, “ Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.” † But chief of all his assertions of oneness with his disciples is that which we find in his description of the awards of the last great day: “ Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. . . . Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting

* Luke ix. 48.

† Matt. x. 42.

fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. . . . Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me."

We read these words with wondering awe and gratitude. Can it be that He who sits on the throne of all worlds makes my griefs and interests his own; that he regards the wrongs done to me as done to him, and the favours conferred on me as conferred on himself? Would he have me to understand and believe that if I am in prison for his name's sake he is in prison with me; that if I lie on a bed of sickness he is a partaker of my sickness; that if I hunger and thirst he suffers with me? If so—and we have his own word for it—then I can understand what his apostle meant when he said, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice." His words give us the assurance of something more than the most perfect sympathy. Rich indeed in consolation is the fact that we have a High Priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and who regards us in all our perplexities and sorrows with a Brother's eye. But more than this: he assures us of such an identity with us, such a community with our interests, that the stroke which is struck at us is struck at him, and the kindness which is shown to us is shown to him. No shame can dim the lustre of his crown in heaven; no spear can ever enter his heart again; his soul will never more be sorrowful unto death; in all

the world which his presence fills with joy there will be found no Gethsemane and no Calvary : but in our shame and pain and anguish, in our Gethsemanes of strong crying and tears, he makes himself one with us in every respect but this of actual suffering. He that toucheth us toucheth the apple of his eye. And being one with us, his guardian shield, his supporting arm, is ours, and ours the wisdom that will guide us through the mazes of our earthly lot, the grace that will sanctify our hearts by the very trials which distress us most, and the sympathy which will wipe away our tears and make us feel how possible it is even to glory in tribulations. "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, and as cedar-trees beside the waters. Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee."

What words of comfort are those which the apostle John has recorded in the tenth chapter of his Gospel : "I am the good Shepherd," said Christ. This is one of the many occasions on which our Lord appropriates to himself characters which are ascribed to Jehovah in the Old Testament. "Jehovah is my Shepherd," said David; "I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures : he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul : he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil : for thou art with me ; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." All this

Christ professes to do for those who believe in him "I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." Unlike the hireling, whose own the sheep are not, and who, when he seeth the wolf or the robber coming, thinks only of himself and fleeth, leaving the sheep to be devoured or stolen, the good Shepherd hazards his own life in defence of his flock, and even lays it down to save them. To this day it not unfrequently happens that the leopards and panthers which prowl about the wadies of Palestine attack the flock in the presence of the shepherd, and he must be ready to do battle at a moment's warning. But never, never, has other shepherd done for his sheep what Christ has done for His. It was not in simple defence of his flock, but for its redemption, that he laid down his life. The world was perishing; the whole race had gone astray from God, and no mere power could bring them back to God's fold and family. All entrance was closed against them by the justice which demanded that they should die. And Christ, of pure love, "gave his life" for them. "All we like sheep had gone astray; we had turned every one to his own way; and the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all."

There is a second of our Lord's sayings about the good Shepherd which receives illustration from Eastern pastoral life. "The sheep hear the shepherd's voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they

know not the voice of strangers." Travellers tell us that this is no fanciful picture, but simple fact. "If a stranger call," says one, "the sheep stop short, lift up their heads in alarm, and if the call is repeated they turn and flee, because they know not the voice of a stranger. They are so tame and so trained that they follow their keeper with the utmost docility. He leads them forth from the fold, or from their houses in the villages, just where he pleases. They are taught to follow, and not to stray away into the unfenced fields of corn which lie so temptingly on either side. Any one that thus wanders is sure to get into trouble. The shepherd calls sharply from time to time, to remind them of his presence. They know his voice, and follow him."

A true parable this of what Christ has done and does for his followers. He has gone before them; he has trodden the path they tread; the path of duty and service, of life and death. He still goes before them. By his providence he prepares the way they have to tread, and leads them in it; by his word he instructs them how to walk so as to please God; while by his Spirit he inclines them to the good and disinclines them to the evil, strengthens them for work and comforts them in sorrow. Then let us say with one heart and voice,—

" Jesus, still lead on,
Till our rest be won;
And although the way be cheerless,
We will follow calm and fearless:
Guide us by thy hand
To our fatherland."

The very next chapter of the Gospel by St. John

records the miracle of the raising of Lazarus from the dead on which we have already remarked as full of comfort. Some of the words uttered by our Lord on this great occasion are the most joyous and heart-sustaining that have ever been heard by human ear.

Standing by the grave of Lazarus we are brought into near contact with that most dreaded thing, death. We can understand the feeling which arose in the bosom of a dying man, who, when told that death was at hand, sprang from the bed on which he lay, and rushed through his chamber exclaiming, "I will not die; I will not die!" From our birth onwards we see around us a dark horizon through which our eye cannot penetrate, but through which we know that we must pass into a region of which no bodily sense and no mental power now possessed by us can give us any information. There is no remaining for ever where we are, and there is no passing into another state but through the dark cloud which bounds our horizon. And the change which we undergo in passing through this cloud is such as to fill us with many fears. We tremble. We perplex ourselves with questions which we cannot answer. We work ourselves into a state of impotent rebelliousness against our inevitable lot, a spirit whose natural but foolish language is, "I will not die; I will not die!"

In these circumstances, no argument which human reason can suggest will do for us what Christ's words do. "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth

and believeth in me shall never die." This is so wondrous a statement that we cannot accept it without asking on whose authority it is made. And when we have asked we can come to no other conclusion than that in which Mary and Martha rested, that He who made it is "the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world." His authority to say what death is and whither the dying go, is beyond all question. "He came forth from God." The unseen was not unseen to him. All worlds were present to his mind. And it is with profound thankfulness we accept his word as decisive. They who believe in Christ "never die." Strange, but blessed assurance! Those who have passed away from the fellowships of earth still live; they live unto God. Their life is real, though impalpable, yet not visionary. It is a life of conscious thought, of conscious affection, of conscious emotion. There has been no gap, no interval, not a moment's cessation in the continuous stream of that life. It flows on undivided, uninterrupted by the article of death; and could our eye follow it, we should find that it has only widened and deepened, to flow on more purely and fully than ever. It was needful that the banks which confined as well as contained its waters here, should give way and be broken, to let its waters pursue a freer and nobler course in the other world.

But what of the body which is left in the grave when the spirit passes away and enters on a higher life? "I am the Resurrection, and the Life," said Christ: "he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." This is more than a revela-

tion of immortality. The great probability of the soul surviving death was argued by the wiser of the heathen, although it is made certain to us only by the authority of Christ; but that our bodies should live again, and be made as immortal as the soul, never entered even the dreams of heathen philosophy. The men of Athens mocked when Paul preached to them "Jesus and the resurrection." "Hark, ye wise men, whoever is among you, the wisest of past generations, did ever your ears hear such strange and unheard of news?" said an African chief when told by a missionary that the dead shall rise again. His wonder was mingled with a dread of the great judgment. "Father," he said to the missionary, "I love you much. Your visit and your presence have made my heart white as milk. The words of your mouth are sweeter than honey; but the words of a resurrection are too great to be heard. I do not wish to hear again about the dead rising: the dead cannot arise; the dead must not arise!"

The doctrine of the resurrection of the dead is peculiar to the gospel, and one of its glories. And while, like the doctrine of a future state, when associated with the idea of judgment, it may well fill men with awe and dread, our Lord's announcement of it was one of joy and gladness. "I am the Resurrection, and the Life," he said: not the Resurrection alone, nor the Life alone, but both. He saves his people from their sins, pardoning their guilt, purifying their hearts, and finally perfecting their whole nature. Were we to describe the present state as one of death and corruption, there would be little exaggeration in

the description. Sin is death, and misery is death. All things corrupt and die; the most luxuriant vegetation, the strongest persons. There is death in the soul and death in the body. There is moral corruption, and there is physical corruption. The life that now is, vegetable and animal, is fed by the death and corruption of the life that once was. And the life that now is shall decay and die to feed the life that shall be. But Christ has lifted the veil off the future, and revealed "life and incorruption" as the heritage of his people.

Glorious heritage! a body no longer liable to disease, but incorruptible,—a soul no longer liable to sin, but incorruptible,—a mind awakened from the torpor and freed from the bonds of time, and soaring amid the heights and beatitudes of eternity! This is the perfection of man: this is the glory to be revealed. And this glory, this perfection, is not the fruit and outgrowth of a natural law of progress implanted in our being, it is the gift of Christ. He is the Resurrection and the Life; not the Revealer only, but the Author of the risen and glorified life which awaits the redeemed. The first Adam was "living:" the second Adam is "life-giving." As in him we have the righteousness which sinners need and the strength which saints need, so in him have we the resurrection and the life. And that which is pledged to us by his promise will be conferred on us by his power. "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." Now thanks be to God, which giveth us this victory over death and the grave, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Lord did not accompany his assurance of future life and incorruption with any explanation of the difficulties which the great theme suggests to our minds. "He spoke with authority." And our difficulties are probably capable of no solution that would not carry us into regions of thought altogether foreign to our mortal state. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." "Through faith," it may be added, we understand that man was formed at first of the dust of the earth, and that God breathed into him the breath of life, and he became a living soul. It is "through faith" likewise, and only through faith—not a blind faith, but a faith which rests on the word of God—we understand that the dead shall rise again. And in the presence of the authority on which our faith rests the students of natural science should bow in silence. "The most sceptical philosopher," we are told by Dr. George Wilson, "could but say, when asked if our bodies should rise again, that he would reply neither yes nor no." "There is not certainly," continues Dr. Wilson, "a single fact in physical science, which contradicts the possibility of the resurrection; whilst there are multitudes of facts, such as the phenomena of germination so grandly referred to by St. Paul in his magnificent exposition of the rising from the dead, and the change of the caterpillar into the butterfly, which assist us in believing in the certainty, and even so far in realizing the nature, of the great change."

On one point our Lord spoke with tender emphasis

in his argument with the Sadducees. "Neither can they die any more," he said. "The children of the resurrection are not merely to be walled off, as it were, from all deadly foes and mortal influences, but they are to be rendered incapable of death. It shall have no more dominion over them. They shall not only never die, but they shall be undying."

"Few, I think," said Dr. George Wilson, "can have sat beside the death-beds of others, especially of dear relatives, and witnessed the lingering illness and long-protracted agonies which so often precede the last struggle, without looking forward with horror to the possibility of all that agony being endured again. The death of a sinful mortal is in every case a dread reality; and to be assured that they who 'shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world' shall never know again the dreadfulness of dying, is a great consolation to all who have seen others die in the faith, and have hope of a blessed resurrection themselves." Few, we add, can have stood by the grave of one who has died in the Lord, and seen the lifeless remains of a loved one committed to its keeping, dust to dust, ashes to ashes, in sure and certain hope of the resurrection unto eternal life, without a thrill of grateful joy that the Son of God once stood by the grave of a friend, and said, "I am the Resurrection, and the Life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

Time and space would altogether fail to unfold the consolations which Christ addressed to his disciples during the twenty-four hours which preceded his

death. Gather the books of all ages and of all nations into one pile, ransack their stores, and you will not find in them all so much of true comfort as is concentrated in a few pages of the Gospel by St. John. To these pages, as to a river of living waters, the Christian heart turns instinctively for refreshment and strength; while in the most parched wilderness the well-known words fall upon the bruised spirit as dew upon the tender herb.

“It is expedient for you,” said Christ, “that I go away.” This was a hard saying. How could it be? Had he not been everything to them while he was with them—their Counsellor, Comforter, Guide, Friend? There was not a thought in their hearts but they found that he knew it. They had not a want which he could not supply. Their diseases he could heal. Their sorrows he shared. Their aspirations he was more than competent to realize. And yet they were to believe that it was better for them that he should leave them than that he should remain with them. But if He said it, they might believe even this. He was faithful and true; his word could not be broken; and what they knew not now they would know hereafter.

“I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth. . . . He shall teach you all things. . . . And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” The designation which Christ gave to the Holy Spirit is more comprehensive in its meaning than our English word “Comforter.” It

includes in it the ideas of instruction, guidance, strength, and defence. And so far were the disciples from being now to be left "orphans" or friendless, that they were to find all these in the promised Spirit. In him they were to find likewise peace, joy, and hope; for these are fruits of the Spirit. And every time their own hearts were moved with paternal affection they were reminded of the pledge which the Lord had given them that the Holy Spirit would be given them in answer to prayer. "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" *

How shall we estimate the value of this gift of gifts? The thousands who, on the day of Pentecost, looked on Him whom they had pierced, and mourned and were in bitterness as one is in bitterness for a first-born, and found life and peace in the now glorified Saviour, are its witnesses. The churches which were found of old walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, are its witnesses. The sufferers of all ages who, looking not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, have been able to say, "We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed;

* Luke xi. 11—13.

because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us,”* are its witnesses. And that we too may be its witnesses we invoke the presence and indwelling of this blessed promised Spirit.

“Come to our poor nature’s night
With thy blessed inward light,
Holy Ghost, the Infinite,
Comforter Divine.

“Orphan are our souls, and poor :
Give us, from thy heavenly store,
Faith, love, joy, for evermore,
Comforter Divine.

“Like the dew thy peace distil ;
Guide, subdue, our wayward will,
Things of Christ unfolding still,
Comforter Divine.

“In us, Abba, Father, cry,
Earnest of our bliss on high,
Seal of immortality,
Comforter Divine.”

There is one thing very memorable in the words of Christ respecting the office of the Holy Spirit: he made that office revolve around himself. The Spirit “shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.”† “The things of the Spirit,” the things in the knowledge of which he enlightens men, are the things which concern the Lord Jesus; the things which concern both what he was and what he is, what he did on earth and what he is doing in heaven. These are the things which, when applied to the hearts of men by the Holy Spirit, change their character, build them up in holiness, and comfort them in trouble. “We know not the manner of

* Rom. v. 3—5.

† John xvi. 14.

that blessed agent's operation ; but we know that it is a most sweet and precious reality. Sometimes he takes a passage of Scripture descriptive of the Saviour, that has been dark, uninteresting, and common-place before, opens it suddenly, as one would touch the secret spring of a casket, and lo ! what a volume of meaning—how much it tells of Christ—how it places him before the mental eye in more than the brightness and distinctness of sensible presence ! How often upon a bed of anguish, and in the valley of the shadow of death itself, has the Spirit made such a clear and precious revelation of Jesus to the afflicted saint, as made him forget all his pain, and think himself within the gate of heaven ! There was no visible Saviour before his eyes ; but his soul saw him, and was full of the knowledge of his love ; the beatitudes of the upper paradise, the glorious scenery of heaven, seemed opening before him ! ”

We do not wonder, then, that even when promising to his people the perpetual presence of “another Comforter,” Christ should still represent Himself, the Living One, as the centre and source of all good. “Let not your heart be troubled : ye believe in God, believe also in me.” This is not only the shortest, but the surest way to comfort. What the voice was which commanded the Galilean waves into stillness, these words are to the troubled heart : “Have faith in God : have faith also in me.”

How such faith comforts and sustains is soon told. In the incarnate Son we see, as it were, with our own eyes, what God is, and what he wills to do for all

who trust in him; and in the light thus shed on the character of God and on our own relation to him, we are assured that chance and fate are words, not things. We are not at the mercy of wind and waves. None of us can be lost in the crowd that depend on God's will and bidding. "Believe in God," said He who never insulted man's misery, and never said peace when there was no peace; "believe also in me."

And there are times when this one prescription of faith in Christ can alone be of any avail. Crushed beneath a weight which we cannot bear, bewildered by perplexities from which we can see no way of escape, covered with a cloud through which neither sun, nor moon, nor stars, shine for many days, in vain shall we be invited to listen to arguments and considerations which at other times would be precious and soothing. Tell us only of Christ, the Living One, who knows us, loves us, cares for us, and is able to save us. Tell us to have faith in him. We need no more. This will be our light in darkness, our strength in weakness. Like the child in the storm, who smiled at danger because his father was at the helm, we shall dismiss fear and anxiety, we shall bear suffering, we shall dry our tears, because we know that all things are in Christ's hands, and he doeth all things well. Faith in Christ is rest, peace, and strength to our souls.

From the beginning of his ministry Christ had preached Himself as the fountain of consolation. "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." The whole extent of human misery lay exposed before his

eye, and its whole depth as well. He saw the source from which it issued, and traced the ten thousand streams which flow from that source. Multitudes gathered around him, afflicted with all manner of disease. Sinners came to him laden with conscious guilt. He saw the Pharisees, proud, but restless and unhappy. The doubts of the Sadducees, he knew, made them not only earthly but miserable. And there were others, he was aware—the Essenes—who fled from the troubles and turmoil of their nation into wildernesses, if peradventure they might find rest amid the solitudes of nature. There was nothing hidden from his eyes. But he knew there was no human sorrow which he had not power to soothe. “Come unto me, and I will give you rest;” not exemption from toil, nor exemption from suffering, but inward peace and strength, rest to the guilty conscience, rest to the weary heart, rest from the power of sin, and rest, final and perfect, in heaven itself.

The present and the seen were not the limits of Christ's rest. “In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” Christ is the centre and source of the joys of heaven, as he is of the peace and consolation of earth. He could give his followers no conception of the heavenly state more true, more vivid, more attractive than this, that he is there. And his servant the apostle Paul discovered in his day none more worthy, none more comforting. The “building of

God, eternal in the heavens," which he described as the home of departed saints, could boast of no interest comparable to this, that the happy ones who dwell there are "present with the Lord." This is the consummation of Christ's work of love. Finding his people in the very depths of guilt and sin, he redeems and renews them. Leaving them for a time in this world of temptation and sorrow, he keeps them by his mighty power, and comforts them by his tender sympathy. And when all his holy purposes are accomplished he will come again and receive them to himself, that where he is there they may be also. We are already "come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all; and to the spirits of just men made perfect; and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant; and to the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than that of Abel." Those of the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem who have not crossed the flood are one with those who have. And although they know not the fulness of the joy and glory that awaits them, they know that when Christ shall appear they shall see him as he is, and they shall see him *for ever*. Such were the hopes he gave them while he was yet with them. And with these hopes we comfort one another now.

" 'For ever with the Lord!'

Amen, so let it be:

Life from the dead is in that word;

'Tis immortality.

THE WORDS OF JESUS CHRIST.

- “ Here in the body pent,
Absent from him I roam,
Yet nightly pitch my moving tent
A day's march nearer home.
- “ My Father's house on high,
Home of my soul, how near
At times, to faith's foreseeing eye,
Thy golden gates appear !
- “ My thirsty spirit faints
To reach the land I love,
The bright inheritance of saints,
Jerusalem above.
- “ I hear at morn and even,
At noon and midnight hour,
The choral harmonies of heaven
Earth's Babel tongues o'erpower.
- “ For ever with the Lord !
Father, if 'tis thy will,
The promise of that faithful word
E'en here to me fulfil.
- “ So when my latest breath
Shall rend the veil in twain,
By death I shall escape from death,
And life eternal gain.
- “ Knowing as I am known,
How shall I love that word,
And oft repeat before the throne,
'For ever with the Lord !' ”

CHAPTER VII.

FATHERLY GOVERNMENT AND DISCIPLINE.

CONTENTS. — Two miserable beliefs — Bible antidotes — “God reigneth” — “God dealeth with us as with children” — Providence revealed in history — The universal Ruler our heavenly Father — The lilies — The ravens — Principles taught — Providence in little things — Wilberforce’s diary — The natural and the supernatural — Afflictions not the stripes of an angry Judge — Connection between sin and suffering — Chastisement punitive and remedial — Words of Mrs. Schimmelpenninck — Expect suffering — Anecdotes of Cecil and Newton — Letter of Rev. Henry Venn — Cannot interpret the specific cause of affliction — Opinions of Rhodes and George Wilson — Affliction counteractive or preventive — Paul’s thorn in the flesh — Job — Verses by Beattie.

“‘What have you gained by becoming a Christian?’ said his relations to a young Brahmin, who had suffered the loss of all things for Christ. ‘Much,’ he replied; ‘much: I have learned to say, Our Father.’ The Christian Brahmin did not mean that he could now repeat the Lord’s Prayer. That, in itself, done idly or superstitiously, would be as valueless and comfortless to his soul as a repetition of a Hindu prayer. But he had acquired a knowledge of the one true God as *his Father*; and by this the troubled sea of his heart was quieted, the earnest craving of his soul was satisfied; and with a Father in heaven who loved him and cared for him, he could endure to be an outcast for Christ’s sake.” — “WORK AND CONFLICT.”

“ ‘Commit thy way,’ O weeper,
The cares that fret thy soul,
To thine almighty Keeper,
Who makes the worlds to roll.

“ ‘Unto the Lord,’ who guideth
The wind, and cloud, and sea :
Oh, doubt not he provideth
A pathway too for thee.

“ ‘Trust also ;’ for ’tis bootless
To murmur and forebode ;
Th’ Almighty’s arm is doubtless
Full strong to bear thy load.

“ ‘In him’ hide all thy sorrow,
And bid thy fears good night :
He’ll make a glorious morrow
To crown thy head with light.

“ ‘And he shall bring it’ nigh thee,
The goal thou long hast sought,
Though now it seems to fly thee :
Thou shalt ere long be brought

“ ‘To pass’ from grief to gladness,
From night to clearest day ;
Where doubt, and fear, and sadness,
Shall all have passed away.’”

Adapted from PAUL GERHARDT by James S. Stallybrass.

FATHERLY GOVERNMENT AND DISCIPLINE.

WE cannot introduce the subject of this chapter better than by reference to the circumstances in which the verses on the preceding page were written. The "Great Elector" of Brandenburg had issued an arbitrary edict, forbidding the public discussion of certain disputed doctrines; but Paul Gerhardt (preacher at St. Nicolas' Church, Berlin) manfully refused to suppress what he deemed the vital truths of the gospel. He was therefore ejected from his living in 1666. He went forth a homeless exile with his wife and little ones, and, stopping at a country inn on the first night, he walked out into the woods to meditate and pray. The text, "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass," then so appropriate, was suggested to his mind. It was natural for him, as he mused with thankful heart, to embalm the precious words in verse. He returned, and read his song to his weeping wife. They made a vow together never more to distrust their heavenly Father; and their faith soon found its reward. A message arrived from Duke Christian of Merseburg, offering to Paul Gerhardt a hearty welcome, a free pulpit, and a home.

There are two beliefs which, if we entertain them, will convert our afflictions into miseries. The one is, that they spring from chance or fate; and the other, that they are exclusively penal or judicial. Now to both these ideas we have an antidote in Bible teaching. To the notion of chance or fate we have an antidote in the uniformly affirmed doctrine that "God reigneth;" and to the notion that affliction is simple punishment we have an antidote in the affirmation that "God dealeth with us as with sons."

Teach me that I am the sport of chance in my varying circumstances of joy and sorrow, of weal and woe, and you teach me what, if I believe you, will make me miserable. Tossed on a sea which is never at rest, with all its billows rolling over me, I strain my eyes in search of some one to sympathize with me, and stretch forth my hands if peradventure another hand will grasp it and save me. But there is neither heart to sympathize nor hand to save. If my destinies are governed by chance I am left to despair, and to curse the hour wherein I was born.

My position is not one whit bettered if you substitute fate for chance; whether it be the fate of the philosopher who believes only in natural causes which operate with the unvarying certainty of a machine; or the fate of the heathen, a mere blind, irresistible power; or of the Mussulman, a Divine will, it may be, but dissociated from all ideas of wisdom and love. Let us regard ourselves as governed by such a fate, and we shall neither be thankful when we prosper nor hopeful when we suffer. For the good we enjoy we owe no one any

gratitude: sunk in sorrow, there is no one to trust in. Worse than this. The changes of life become to us like the revolutions of wheels, which, strong and heavy, move onward, grinding evermore, without pity or remorse. If to-day the wheel of fate lifts us high, to-morrow it will lay us in the dust and crush us. And in either case we are the sport of a power which has no heart, and can have no sympathy with either our joys or our sorrows.

Let chance and fate then have no place in our heart's creed. "God reigneth." "God dealeth with us as with sons." God, the All-mighty, the All-wise, the All-loving, "dealeth with us." Providence is neither chance nor fate. It is the government which is exercised by a Being of perfect holiness, wisdom, and goodness; a government, therefore, which may be implicitly trusted, having both a heart to feel and an arm to help.

The Bible gives us no disquisitions on providence, but it does what is far better, it gives us histories in which we are made, as it were, to see with our eyes God moving, working, and judging among the children of men. Read the history of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; follow Joseph through his strange and eventful life; accompany Israel through the various scenes of his redemption from Egyptian bondage; and when you have finished the task what impressions have you received? Do you need that any one should prove to you that there is a Providence, or tell you the principles on which Providence acts? You feel rather as if you had seen the hand of God, and as if you had read in letters of light the

attributes which characterize the working of that hand: power the most mighty combined with tenderness the most affectionate; righteousness the purest combined with mercy the most abundant; holiness the most unspotted combined with goodness the richest and freest.

With these impressions you see in the pillar of cloud which led the children of Israel in the wilderness by day, and in the pillar of fire which led them by night, and of which, in its relation to Israel, we have already spoken, the symbol of the providence which still guides the destinies both of mankind and of individual men.

As a race, man is the subject of a Divine government. He has abandoned himself to sin, but God has not abandoned him to ruin or even to his own care. His families and tribes have scattered themselves in all directions, ruled, so far as their own intentions are concerned, by all manner of impulses; but a Divine presence has gone before them, followed them, surrounded them, and fixed the bounds of their habitations. In their wanderings not one of them has been given up to the caprices of chance or the necessities of fate; and not one of their settlements, not the most distant and isolated, has been lost sight of. Many tribes have sunk into extreme ignorance and barbarism, and have been covered for ages with a darkness like that of Egypt; but the continuance of the darkness is measured and determined, and shall cease. They have lost sight of God, but he has not lost sight of them. Though suffered to walk for a season in their own ways, they have witnesses

among them to the power and presence of God ; for he doeth them good, and giveth them rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness.

“God dealeth with” and ruleth over individuals as well as nations. Even those who forget their Maker the most thoroughly are all the while fed and protected by his hand. They traverse the deep for years together unmindful of him, and all the while he gives charge to the winds and waves concerning them. They are rescued from many perils, and do not know that it is the angel of God’s presence that saves them. They plough their fields and reap their harvests, and forget God ; but he does not forget to make his rain to fall and his sun to shine. He fills the barns even of the ‘unthankful and the unjust with plenty.

The pillar of cloud may be taken as the symbol especially of the privilege of the redeemed. They have been spiritually baptized into Christ, and every step of their onward march to Canaan enjoys the guidance and protection of a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. The symbol of the Divine presence is not visible as of old. The Divine hand does not work miraculously. No manna falls from heaven. No rocks are cleft to furnish drink. No mysterious agency saves their garments from waxing old. But the Presence which accompanied ancient Israel was not more real than that which accompanies the spiritual Israel. Our march through the wilderness of this world is as much the object of a Divine guardianship as was that of

“the purchased possession” under the shadow of Sinai.

He whom we often coldly call the universal Ruler is called by Christ our “heavenly Father.” Both titles are true and significant, but that which Christ used inspires us with confidence and affection. The idea involved in it was not new to the world, for the Spirit of Christ had given it to the prophets long before. By the last of the old Testament prophets God said to Israel, “A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear?”* That he was a Father was as well known as that he was a Master, although the people practically forgot both. The history with which they were most familiar, and the poetry which they most cherished, taught the great truth; for in the one they read that God made man in his own image, and in the other they found words of praise which they had chanted in their temple service from the days of David: “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.” The wise son of David wrote no words more memorable than these: “My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction: for whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.”†

The Ruler of the world, then, is our heavenly Father. How different is this idea from the notion of

* Mal. i. 6.

† Prov. iii. 11, 12.

fate. How different the feelings inspired by the one from those inspired by the other.

Our heavenly Father rules, according to Christ's teaching, over both nature and man. The fowls of the air sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns, and yet they are fed—fed by our heavenly Father. The lilies of the field grow without toil or labour, and are clothed with more glory and beauty than the most august of monarchs, by our heavenly Father. Men sow and reap, spin and weave, found and build, toil and sweat, and they too are fed—fed by our heavenly Father. None of them are independent of, none unprovided for, by our heavenly Father.

One of our Lord's illustrations carries us into the region of instinct. The fowls of the air have instincts which teach them what food to eat and where to find it. Every species has its own instinct. "The stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming."* But not only are these instincts the gifts of God, but the creatures so singularly endowed are still dependent on his care, and not the meanest of them falls to the ground in death without his knowledge. "He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry."† The beaver builds his house on the river's bank, uses the materials which nature places at his disposal, and adapts them with beautiful skill to the construction of his dwelling. But the beaver is not thereby independent of Divine care, nor forgotten by his Maker.

* Jer. viii. 7.

† Ps. cxlvii. 9.

The bee constructs its cell with unerring mathematical precision, and scours hill and dale in search of its sweet food, and then stores it as with a foreknowledge of its future wants. But neither is the bee, even when thus endowed, independent of Him that made it. His care still watches over it: his bounty still feeds it.

The second of our Lord's illustrations of providence is taken from the inanimate part of creation. "Consider the lilies of the field how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin." The lilies, beautiful but perishable, and the oaks, majestic, and, as compared with the lily, everlasting, grow, we may be told, by a natural law. Given a fit soil and a fit climate, and every seed will produce its own kind, and, when grown, will produce its own fruit; so that we never find grapes on a thorn-bush, nor figs on thistles. This is God's ordinance, and a merciful ordinance it is. If man did not reap as he sows, if God did not give to every seed its own body, human co-operation with Divine Providence would be impossible. If wheat sometimes produced wheat and sometimes tares, if water sometimes quenched fire and sometimes kindled it, if the stroke of a hammer sometimes wounded and sometimes healed, we should be incapable of ordering our actions in the commonest affairs of life, and should feel ourselves the victims of an incurable disorder in the creation around us. But God has kindly ordained natural laws, and a constancy and regularity in their operation, which enables us to work in harmony with them and to use them as our servants.

This ordinance, kind and essential to our well-being, is not set aside by its great Author when its action is likely to produce suffering; not even when, in the hands of wicked men it is made an instrument of cruelty and wrong. Fire burns. This is the law of its Maker; and the law is not repealed when fire is applied by the persecutor to the persons of God's most faithful servants. The martyr at the stake, most loved of God, is consumed as readily as would be the most worthless of mankind. Poison destroys life. This is the law of its Maker; and the law is not repealed, nor its natural action prevented, when the poison is poured into the lips of the holiest saint under heaven. Not all the cries of the most importunate affection will counteract the deadly power of arsenic. The law by which fire and arsenic do their work is a beneficent law; and to suspend or counteract it at man's desire would be to introduce a confusion and uncertainty which would be fatal to human action.

It will be seen that this ordinance of natural law, which is essential to man's co-working with God, throws a heavy responsibility on a being like man, endowed with intelligence and forethought. Fire burns, we say again. But man is responsible for the use which he makes of it. Let it be applied to the confessor of Christ, and it will destroy his body as certainly as it would any other body. But the man who thus applies it shall answer for his deed at the judgment-seat. Fire burns; and if through want of skill, or of care, or of forethought, it should destroy property or life, the criminality lies at man's

door. And it would be no kindness to the race for God to interpose by miracle, and take from fire its natural power, or compensate by miracle the absence of skill or of care on the part of his creatures. The disasters and sufferings which befall men because God does thus execute his own natural laws must be traced ultimately to the disorder which sin has introduced into the world. The wickedness which intentionally, and the incompetence which unintentionally produces suffering, are the fruits of our fallen condition. And that God does in the midst of man's sins and errors still execute his own natural ordinances should be an occasion neither of wonder nor of regret.

The point of Christ's reference to the laws of nature is this, that these laws are but expressions of the will of our heavenly Father, and that their results are to be ascribed to his continued providence. The growth of the lily and the beauty which adorns it he ascribes directly to our heavenly Father. How the personal power of God works in, or co-works with, the properties with which he has endowed natural objects, is one of the ten thousand questions which we can ask but cannot answer. But Christ would have us to know that nature is not a self-acting machine; that not only was its mechanism originally constructed and set in motion by God, but also that it is still dependent on its Maker, and that it is only by its Maker's power it continues to accomplish its predestined ends. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," he said in defence of his performing a miracle of healing on the Sabbath day. "My Father," to use

the paraphrase of Dr. Doddridge, “in the administration of his providential kingdom, worketh continually from the beginning of the world even till now, and upon Sabbath days as well as others he exerts that unremitting and unwearied energy which is the life of the creation; and in like manner I also work in obedience to the intimations of his will and in subserviency to his glory.” The work of creation, commemorated by sabbatic rest, did not, according to the great Teacher, supersede a Divine activity, uninterrupted by the Sabbath itself, to sustain the life and action of the natural universe. God still works. The lily grows by his power, and is adorned by his hand.

Christ then finds a Divine providence in the region of animal instinct and of natural law; but he refers to these regions only to illustrate and give assurance of a Divine providence over man. “If God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Be not anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.”* “Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.”† Christ spoke with authority, and we hear his voice with thankfulness and joy. He could, had he so willed it, have demonstrated his doctrine with arguments such as philosophers are pleased to hear.

* Matt. vi. 30—32.

† Luke xii. 6, 7.

But it was not his will. He knew better what is in man than to suppose that a philosophical dissertation, whatever its value in some circumstances, is that which is needed to satisfy the universal heart on this subject. His arguments are both simple and profound; and they were the arguments of one of whom it was evident that God was with him.

Accepting, as we do, the doctrine of Christ on the subject of providence, there is no room left for the question whether there is a special or particular providence as well as a general. "The hairs of your head are all numbered." "Not a sparrow falls to the ground without your Father's knowledge. Ye are of more value than many sparrows." A general providence that excludes a particular is a mere shift to separate God as far as possible from the ways of men; and it needs but little thought to perceive its impossibility. What mean you by saying that God sends the broad bright sunshine, but has nothing to do with each single ray of light; that God sends us the rich and enriching shower, but does not concern himself with the tiny drops of which it consists? What boots it to Hagar in her distress to be told that God cares for nations, but not for individuals; that in his hand are the rise and fall of empires, but not the concerns of fugitive servants? what even to be told of a great nation to spring from her son, if the son himself, now driven from his father's house, must perish with thirst? Poor Hagar was too despondent to argue on the subject; but we see, in her history, that providence cannot work out its designs touching that which is great, if it do not care for that which is

little; for the future nation was dependent on the one life of the outcast boy who was now ready to perish. The mother, looking only at the things that were seen, saw no end to her anxieties but in the death of her child. But the story of her deliverance has been written in vain, if it do not teach us that there is an unseen God to whom nothing is mean or small, and from whom no tear, no sigh, is hidden. "The water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs. And she went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice, and wept. And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, 'What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation. And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink.'" The bottle, the water, the shrub, the well, the lad's cry, and the mother's tears—not one of them was too mean to be observed by the Divine Eye, or to be used for the Divine purpose.

Mr. Wilberforce records in his diary a visit from two friends, one distinguished in the political and the other in the literary world, who, when asked if they believed in a particular providence, replied, "Yes, on great occasions." The Christian's remark on this reply was sound and good: "As unphilosophical as

unscriptural. Must not the smallest links be as necessary to maintaining the continuity as the greatest? Great and little belong to our littleness, but there is no great and little to God."

"Who through heaven is guiding
Stars by thousands gliding,
Thousand paths providing—
He nameth and claimeth
Both thee and me.

"Who the thunder swayeth,
Who with lightnings playeth,
Whom the storm obeyeth—
He ruleth and schooleth
Both thee and me.

"He whose finger's motion
Rules the raging ocean,
Calms its wild commotion—
Upholdeth, enfoldeth,
Both thee and me."

We have seen how Christ taught that our heavenly Father rules over nature and over man; how he illustrated the Divine rule over man by the Divine rule over nature, and drew an argument from the less to the greater: if over nature, if over the fowls of the air and the lilies of the field, much more over man.

The truth involves this further idea, that the Divine government over nature is for the sake of man. The world was made for man, not man for the world. And the world is still governed for man's sake. Its natural laws exist not for themselves, but for us. And their constancy, we have seen, notwithstanding the sufferings which it often produces, is a necessity of mercy and wisdom. But these laws, our Lord teaches us, do not exclude the hand of God; and when God sees an end of sufficient importance to be

served he can suspend their action or work independently of them. The miracles of our Lord and his apostles were workings of this order. And in addition to every other purpose which they serve, they teach this lesson, that God still exercises a direct and immediate control over every part of the material creation, and over every property and power with which he has himself endowed it. Fire burns: we resume our illustration. Such is God's ordinance. But when God wills it, he can cause that fire shall not burn. The king of Babylon ordained that whosoever would not worship his great golden image should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And when three men of Israel dared to disobey, he commanded that the furnace should be heated seven times more than it was wont. And these men, being bound in their coats, their hosen, their turbans, and their other garments, were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. And so exceeding hot was the furnace that it destroyed those that cast them in; but over the bodies of the three Israelites the fire had no power, nor was a hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor had the smell of fire passed on them. And how did this happen? Simply because He who gave fire its power to burn was pleased on this occasion to command the fire that it should do his servants no harm. His care over his servants and his mastery over the fire were revealed to the very eye of the king: "Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no

hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."*

That God cares for his servants, that God has power over all the elements of nature, are the prominent lessons of the story. God still cares for his servants: God has still power over the elements of nature. And if that care and power are not made visible as they were in the deliverance of the three friends of Daniel, it is not that they are diminished or changed. How they were exercised of old is written for our instruction, that we may put our faith and hope in God, and enjoy all the consolation that flows from the assurance that he reigneth.

Writing of a philosopher who saw no God in the operation of natural laws, Dr. McCosh says, "He robs the sufferer of everything fitted to impart true consolation. A poor widow has her house burned, or has lost her husband in consequence of the shipwreck of his vessel, and all the comfort that this philosopher has to offer is, that it is a good thing that fire burns and that winds blow. He comes to her and says, 'Would you have fire not to burn? then remember if it does not burn it cannot warm you.' 'Would you have winds not to blow? then bear in mind that the air will become so stagnant that you cannot breathe it.' Whatever the prudent and worldly may say to such a system, when his plans are all prospering, and he is hymning an anthem of praise to his own wisdom, the sufferer feels that he needs to be told of an overruling Providence, which has appointed that particular event for good,

* Dan. iii. 19—25.

and of a living God who feels for the sorrows to which his creatures are exposed.”

There is another belief, we have said, which, if we entertain it, will render peace and comfort in affliction impossible; namely, that our sufferings are penal, and only penal. Tell me that my afflictions are the stripes of an angry judge, that my sorrows are distinct and direct punishments from the hand of the Almighty, each of them a visitation for some sin known or unknown to me, and I cannot be happy. Like the heathen I shall be dismayed at the very signs of heaven. Every element of nature which is capable of producing pain or suffering will seem to me an instrument of wrath. I shall be as one threatened by all the powers of the universe. The winds and the rains, the heat of summer and the cold of winter, will speak to me only of an angry God. Anything like comfort and peace will be impossible.

To the belief that our sufferings are only penal and judicial, two antidotes may be proposed: first, you may disconnect sin and suffering altogether, and deny that the one has anything to do with the other; or, secondly, you may adopt the principle of the apostle Paul, “God dealeth with you as with sons.”

To the first of these courses it is a fatal objection that it is in direct opposition to the teachings of holy Scripture, according to which the fountain of human sorrow was opened in the first sin of Adam and Eve. No parentage can be proved with greater certainty than that of death. Sin it is that “brings forth

death." And every theory on the subject that either denies or overlooks the fact of human sinfulness, not only fails to account for human suffering, but involves in it a grave impeachment of the righteousness of God, if it does not lead to a questioning of his government altogether. The all but universal feeling of mankind is, that there is some connection between sin and suffering; and this feeling is justified by innumerable instances in common and daily life, in which sin is visibly the cause of suffering. The most careless wayfarer cannot help observing in every path he frequents, the picture of "sorrow dogging sin." We do not for a moment hesitate to reject every offer of relief from the fears of an avenging God, which is based on the assumption that sin has nothing to do with suffering, and that suffering is in no sense penal and judicial.

We turn then to the apostle's teaching: "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?"

Chastisement bears a twofold character, and serves a twofold purpose: it is both a righteous punishment and a loving remedy; a punishment for offences committed, and a remedy applied to the correction of the evil disposition which produced these offences. The good of the child is the grand motive of the infliction, but the infliction would never take place but for the wrong which the child has committed. The parent who does not concern himself about the good of his child may pursue either of two courses: he may consult his own ease by letting his child do as

he likes ; or, in mere anger, when passion is excited, he may beat and buffet the offender and drive him out of his presence. The right-hearted parent will do neither. He may be angry, he will be angry, with his offending child, but his anger will be the anger of a loving heart ; and when he uses the rod it will be not to gratify himself, but to do good to his child. The end to be served includes the idea of punishment, but only so far as punishment is corrective ; and it is a punishment the present withholding of which would be an act of judgment, not of mercy ; a punishment by means of which love seeks the offender's good.

This is the aspect in which Christians are taught to regard all their afflictions : they are chastisements, and as such they are punitive ; but they are inflicted by a wise and loving hand, and are designed to promote their spiritual good. They are thus remedial as well as punitive.

Let both ideas be combined, and they will produce the right state of feeling ; neither the feeling of a criminal who is undergoing his sentence of punishment in sullen hatred to the hand which inflicts it and to all around him, nor the feeling merely of a patient who is subjected to a remedial process by a kind and skilful physician ; but the feeling of a child who is made conscious of his ill-deserving, and is humbled because of it, and yet gratefully recognises in the rod the means by which a wise love seeks his welfare.

The heart of the Christian sufferer exults in the thought that all affliction comes from his heavenly

Father, and is sent in love. But it is not well to forget that, being chastisement, it has a punitive aspect. "What dost thou think of that servant," said Mrs. Schimmelpenninck, in the midst of much bodily suffering, "who wills not to receive his wages? The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life. Now death, and the pain, sickness, and sorrow, which lead to it, are so trying to my nature, that I shrink even from the thought of them; yet they are my wages and my inheritance. I am now more than seventy-three, and I have passed a long life without receiving these things as I ought. Last year it was first brought in clearness to my mind that death and suffering should not only be submissively borne as coming from God, but received as the necessary consequence of sin, the wages we have earned, our just due; and, oh! I do deeply wish to receive them as such, not shrinking from one or the other, but, as it were, meeting the Lord half-way in the willingness of my heart; knowing that he is strong though I am weak, and that grace can conquer nature. I have long known that his gift is eternal life."

This was not the language of one who was crouching before God through fear of his judgments, but of one who could call God her Father through Jesus Christ, and who knew well that the sufferings of his children are the chastisements of Fatherly love. "Her spirit," we are told, was at this very time "like that of a happy confiding child in the arms of its father." After a night of great pain, she said, "I have suffered much pain lately, and so have

others I love ; and I have thought much of suffering. Our Lord was made perfect through suffering : it tracked his every footstep. As with the Master, so with the servant. He forewarns us that tribulation is the path to his kingdom : the experience of his children confirms the same. Let us not faint then, nor be weary. He walks with us, as with the holy children in the furnace ; and we will join them in their song of thanksgiving." Again we find her saying, "Chastening is one of the most precious promises to God's children. The very meaning of our being God's children is to exercise this discipline of love, that we might be conformed to the image of Jesus. We must not faint under it, because it is a proof of his love ; neither must we despise it, because it has a voice expurgatory of something evil, and tends to work in us the greatest of all blessings, to be ' partakers of his holiness.' "

And yet with these ideas she would remember, and would have those about her to remember, that sorrow and death are wages earned by us ; that though, being children of God, we are no longer under condemnation, yet God is pleased in the present state to perpetuate these memorials of our fall ; and that when we are personally the subjects of them, it becomes us to be deeply humbled under his mighty hand. This is a very different state of mind from that which we have described as most miserable, the state of mind produced by the idea that every pang we suffer and every cloud that darkens our path is a sign of God's displeasure towards us. We may believe that all our sorrows are fruits of sin, penal consequences

of sin, or, to speak more plainly still, punishments of sin; but if we believe at the same time that these punishments are not the judgments of a displeasure which would banish us from God, but the chastisements of a love which would bring us near to him, we shall be brought into the very safest and happiest state of mind we can cherish, a state of deep humiliation mingled with filial confidence in God.

Let us then remember habitually that God deals with us as with children, and the happiest results will follow.

First, we shall expect suffering. I do not mean that we shall always be on the look out for it, watching every small cloud that appears above the horizon as if it were the forerunner of a storm. But we shall be prepared for it, and not be taken by surprise when it comes, as if some strange thing were happening to us, far less as if affliction were not consistent with our position and privileges as children of God. Richard Cecil called one day at the shop of a prosperous bookseller with whom he was on terms of intimate friendship. His friend being at home, but particularly engaged, Mr. Cecil sent him a message to the effect that he wanted an interview with him, if but for a few minutes. The interview was granted, and the minister found the bookseller sitting by the cot of his child. The child was dying, but was holding its father's hand with a convulsive grasp. "Thank God; thank God," exclaimed Mr. Cecil; "thank God, he has not forgotten you. I have thought much of you lately. I have been much afraid for you. You have been so prosperous for so

long a time, that I have been almost afraid that God had forgotten you. But I said to myself, Surely God will not forsake such a man as this, will not suffer him to go on in prosperity without some check; and I see he has not. No; God has not forgotten you."

A similar circumstance is recorded of John Newton. Hearing that a person in whose welfare he was greatly interested had met with peculiar success in business, and was deeply immersed in worldly engagements, he called on him in his counting-house, and, taking him aside, told him his apprehensions of his spiritual welfare. His friend, without making any reply, called down his partner in life, who came with her eyes suffused with tears and unable to speak. Inquiring the cause, he was told she had just been sent for to one of her children who was from home, and was supposed to be dying. Clasping her hands in his, Mr. Newton cried, "God be thanked, he has not forsaken you. I do not wish your babe to suffer, but I am happy to find God gives you this token of his favour."

These good men had rightly interpreted Scripture: "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." Yet we have no right to interpret the long absence of chastisement, or what seems to us its long absence, as a sign of our Father's forgetfulness or displeasure. We may be subject to trials which no one knows but ourselves. And if we are not, still let no one sit in judgment on God's dealings towards us. Tribulation may be only deferred for a time, and may be much nearer than we anticipate.

Writing to a friend in 1761, the Rev. Henry Venn, of Huddersfield, said, "Your account of Sir John Barnard is very moving. It is very remarkable that he was once very much struck with, and seemed not to agree with me in, an observation I made to this effect: that if we were without chastening, whereof all are partakers, then are we bastards, and not sons; that is, the God of heaven and earth neglects our education, and is provoked to overlook us, as men are wont to do their base-born children. I had more than one or two conversations with him on the subject; and I suppose the continued prosperity he had met with, the honour and high esteem he was always held in, led him to conclude that he wanted this mark of a child of God. Since that time you see the cross has been his portion; and a long season of increasing infirmities and pain, and all the exercises of patience attending a lingering but mortal malady, have been appointed to him. Sure I am my eyes have seldom beheld his fellow. Such constant circumspection and such deep humility, such unfeigned Christian love, expressing itself in a total abstinence from evil speaking, is rarely to be found, even amongst the faithful in Christ Jesus. Happy saint! to be so near the glorious transformation."

The fact that we are God's children should lead us then to expect, not that our life's voyage shall be bright, and smooth, and pleasant, without perils and contrary winds, but rather that we shall have to encounter many storms and dangers before we reach the eternal world. Only let us never forget that all

things do work together for good to them that love God.

Secondly, believing that God dealeth with us as with children, we shall not expect to be able to interpret the specific cause and design of every affliction.

Men do sometimes see their sin in their punishment, the connection being clear as the sun at noon-day. The discipline to which Jacob was subjected those long years that he spent in the service of Laban, and to which he was afterwards subjected by the misconduct of his own children, must have reminded him without ceasing of his own early violations of truth and of the deceit he had practised on his blind old father. The afflictions which clouded the last years of the life of David could not fail to keep him in the most humble remembrance of his own sins. And instances like these are common in the life of Christians, instances in which the sufferers themselves can see with perfect clearness why the Lord afflicts them and what end he designs to work out by their afflictions. "The God of love has taught me," said William Rhodes, "to see the meaning of my own dispensation in the clearest light, and I now perfectly approve it with all my heart."

Mr. Rhodes thought that such a perception of the specific design of our afflictions, and of their adaptedness to effect it, was necessary to the possession of "joy" in tribulation. "Reverential submission to the will of God," he said, "will do much to repress the rebellion of our spirits, and impart a patient serenity to our

hearts; but it will not repress frequent and unholy wishes that our lot had been different from what it is, it will not make us pleased with the sadness of our condition, it will not inspire joy. Some yet higher sentiments are requisite to produce this frame of mind, which is the perfection of an afflicted state. The grand thing we want to perfect our repose is this: to understand our dispensation, our individual dispensation, to ascertain the reasons and intentions of God for having placed us under it, and to see how it is most wisely and tenderly suited to promote our highest good. When this most blessed illumination is obtained by prayer, then in 'his light we see light;' we are able to look upon our whole condition with divine and celestial eyes. We almost see it as God sees it. He is pleased with it, and we are pleased with it."

But is it so? Must we *see* what God means by our sufferings before we can rejoice in his dealings towards us? The words of another great sufferer, George Wilson, commend themselves as wise and Scriptural. "Do not wonder and lament," he wrote to a friend, "if you cannot see that your present afflicted state is the best one for you. Many good people make the mistake of insisting on sufferers acknowledging that their miseries are in *all* respects blessings, which they should thank God for as such. God, who knoweth our frames, has not asked this at our hands. It is arrogating to ourselves the Lord's prerogative of omniscience to pretend to affirm that we *see* that what has happened to us is the best thing that could have happened. An affliction would be no trial of our faith if we saw this. Now it is an essen-

tial condition of our probation here that we should walk by faith, *not by sight*; that we should *not see* that what happens is best, but should believe *without seeing*, or having proof offered us, that it is best, simply because God has ordained it. I do not pretend to have perceived that my illnesses were the best things that could have occurred to me: I am content to rejoice in the conviction that *all* things work together for good to God's people. Assuredly I see *good*; but I do not venture to say that I see *best*: it is enough to see the former. . . . It is enough to have this to praise God for. He may show us in another world that it was not only good, but best for us to bear the yoke he laid on us. Meanwhile he tries our faith by giving us no proof of what we may well believe, that all was very good; and he stills our murmurs by saying, as he did to Paul, 'My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.' "

"To profess," the same sufferer wrote on another occasion, "to discover what God's object was in sending us particular afflictions, must, in the great majority of cases, be an unwise occupation; although not always. But I think we may always find something to learn from what happens to us; and that if we have some profitable lesson taught it is enough, without insisting that that lesson, and no other, was the one intended to be taught."

When the physician has to deal with a specific disease, a disease to which he can give a distinct name, the cause and symptoms and tendencies of which

are obvious, he applies specific remedies. But there are cases in which he has no specific disease to deal with ; only the whole system of the patient is morbid ; its vitality is becoming feebler and feebler, and if the tide of life do not speedily turn its last drop will soon ebb away. Such a case requires as skilful and careful, if not as painful a treatment, as when specific disease is to be counteracted and cured.

Even so it is with our souls. Sometimes we labour under a distinct malady which may be named. It may belong to one or other of the three classes of spiritual disease which our text-book calls the lust of the eye, and the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, or to some other form or species of disease. And our Physician, our heavenly Father, may see fit to use a specific remedy the occasion and fitness of which we shall ourselves recognise. Or ours may be a low state of the spiritual life. The action of the heart is weak. The pulse is feeble. All the vital organs are languid. We are in danger of dying through sheer exhaustion, or falling under some form of active and fatal disease springing out of the lowness of our estate. And in these circumstances our heavenly Physician may subject us to a treatment of which he might say, "What I do ye know not now, but ye shall know hereafter." We may have been but little conscious of our diseasedness. The probability is, that it has been undermining our spiritual constitution unknown to ourselves ; and all that we can know of the remedy is, that it is producing a stimulating and quickening effect on our spiritual system. We are humbled ; we attain a clearer perception of

the comparative value of earthly and heavenly things; we are brought nearer to God; we feel more sensibly the powers of the world to come, and watch more earnestly against sin and temptation. Our spiritual health is thus restored, and the end of fatherly chastisement is accomplished.

There is another circumstance that may often render it difficult for us to ascertain the specific cause and design of our afflictions. They may be counteractive or preventive of evils of whose presence or of whose approach we may be unconscious.

They may be counteractive or preventive. In certain states of the atmosphere, or during the prevalence of certain diseases, the physician prescribes a particular course of living, or special medicinal precautions, not to cure us of actual disease, but to counteract influences which are in danger of producing disease. With a similar moral design the father may watch over his children. They are exposed to moral influences which are fitted to deprave their conscience, and heart, and life. Of their danger they themselves know but little; but their father sees it, and makes it his study to counteract influences more to be dreaded than those which assail the life of the body. He cannot remove his children to a wilderness or solitude where they shall be beyond the reach of danger; and if he did separate them from their kind, they would carry with them in their own bosoms seeds of evil and tendencies to wrong the destruction or repression of which would require his utmost discretion and care. Now a father cannot counteract the evil influences to which his children are exposed without

inflicting suffering upon them. He must cross their wishes; he must restrict their liberties; he must turn them from paths of their own choosing, and insist on their walking in paths of his choice; he must deny them what they pant to possess, and prescribe for them sometimes what they loathe. All this will be painful to them. And the reason of much of it perhaps they cannot understand. To understand it they must have their father's experience and foresight, and their father's sense of the importance of a wholesome moral training; and these they have not, just because they are children. And not feeling the necessity of the discipline to which they are subjected, nor seeing its reason, they are conscious only of its painfulness.

This is a picture of our condition as God's children. Our moral and spiritual health is endangered by circumstances and influences around us, by seeds of evil and roots of bitterness in our own nature; and of these occasions of danger we have little knowledge and still less appreciation. Our heavenly Father, however, knows all, and he knows, what we cannot know, how best to counteract them. The crosses and disappointments, the bereavements and the pains, which bulk so largely in our life's experience, and impart to it so sombre a colouring, may be, yea doubtless are, the means by which he is both purifying and preserving us. These means are not of our choosing, but they are the choice of infallible wisdom; and the right-hearted child will say, "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight."

The apostle Paul was favoured on one occasion as

perhaps no other mortal has ever been. He was caught up into paradise where Christ is, and heard there unspeakable words, perhaps from the lips of the glorified Saviour, which it was not lawful for a man to utter. The manner of his rapture was a mystery to himself, for whether it was in the body or out of the body he could not tell; but of its reality he had no doubt. And seeing he was not permitted to reveal what he saw and heard, the design of it must have been to strengthen his own faith as an apostle, and give him increased confidence in proclaiming the gospel as not of men, but of God. But man at his best estate is very weak, and is strangely perverse in turning good into evil. This Divine favour conferred on Paul, and conferred on him for so important a purpose, endangered his humility. And lest he should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations vouchsafed to him, there was given to him a thorn in the flesh, some bodily disease which pained him like the constant piercing of a thorn. For this thing he besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from him; and his prayer was heard, but not granted. The thorn continued. But Christ's strength was made perfect in his weakness, so that he could glory in his infirmities.

These facts, related by Paul himself, contain a world of meaning. They illustrate the position that God's dealings with his children are often counter-active and preventive of evil, so that their specific cause and reason are not discoverable. Paul knew exactly why the thorn in the flesh was given to him. How completely it answered its end, which was the

prevention of spiritual pride and the promotion of humility, is evident from the fact that, for fourteen years, Paul kept this marvellous rapture into heaven a secret, and divulged it at last only when unreasonable men challenged or depreciated his apostolic authority.

But we may have life-long thorns in the flesh, and through Divine mercy they may be accomplishing salutary purposes, and we, notwithstanding, be unable to discover the specific purpose for which they are sent. All we can know is, that God is dealing with us as with children. He sees evils and dangers of which we know little or nothing, and exercises the discipline which his own wisdom dictates. And if, in our impatience, we say, "Show us wherefore thou contendest with us," he might reply by assuring us that he is not contending with us; that he is only watching over us with a Fatherly concern for our welfare; that by what pains us he is warding off evils which, though unseen, are near at hand, and counteracting tendencies within and influences without which threaten our spiritual ruin; in short, that because he loves us he consults our profit rather than our pleasure, and in love chastens us, that now in our earthly childhood we may be prepared for our heavenly manhood.

The history of Job's sufferings and consolation bears directly on the point now in hand. Job could not know nor find out the specific cause or design of the disasters which befell him, and it was not the discovery of it that either gave him peace at the first or

restored him to peace at the last. When the intelligence reached him that his property and family were all gone, he arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell upon the ground and worshipped, and said, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." This was a great triumph of faith and patience. "In all this," says the narrative, "Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly."

But there is a still greater trial, and ultimate, if not immediate, triumph of faith and patience recorded. Satan was permitted to smite Job with sore boils, probably a form of leprosy, from the sole of the foot unto his crown. And Job took a piece of broken earthenware to scrape himself with, and he sat down among the ashes. Poor miserable man! we are disposed to call him. His condition was worse than that pictured by Christ in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus; for here was a rich man turned into a Lazarus.

There was one who should have been his comforter now. He was loathsome to look upon, it is true; but who shall bear with him and cheer him if his wife does not? But hear this friend of his bosom. "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die." "Wilt thou still serve and worship the God who has visited thee with these calamities, or at least forsaken thee and left thee to the will of thine enemies? Curse him, and die." The sentiment was heathenish, but how was it received? "What? shall

we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" This *was* a great triumph of faith and patience. Like a Christian whose words have often been recorded, Job could in his weal say, "I find God in all," and in his woe, "I find all in God."

But Job had three friends who came from distant parts to condole with him and comfort him. And "they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great." From their after-speeches we may judge their thoughts. They were confounded, not merely by the extent of the calamity which had overwhelmed him, but by the inferences which they drew from it. "So wicked a man!" "So great a hypocrite!" These were their rash conclusions. How far Job divined them we do not know, or how far he was chafed and irritated by their long silence; but now, alas! he opened his mouth and cursed his day. And his words are recorded. Sad words they are; the words of a man in a tumult of rebellious passion, in a fit of dark despair.

For a time Job lost his faith in God, in God's goodness and mercy. The seven days' silence during which his friends had gazed upon him being once broken by the fevered and maddened words of his despair, there followed a long controversy between him and his friends. In that controversy many true and beautiful sayings were uttered by both parties, but on the main question at issue Job was in the right. Was he a hypocrite, or not? Were the afflictions of Providence a sign of special displeasure,

uncovering hypocrisy and hidden sin? The three maintained it, and Job denied it. In the end the Lord said to Eliphaz, "My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath." They had misinterpreted the ways of God with man.

Job was restored to a right mind, that is, to a devout, humble, submissive mind, not after his prosperity was restored, but before, while yet his afflictions weighed him down; and before he could have known anything of the part which Satan had in his afflictions, or of the design of God in permitting him to be tested so severely. There were two ideas which took possession of his mind as the result of all that God had said to himself and his friends:—*

First, that he, Job, was a poor, wicked, sinful creature. He obtained new views of his own unworthiness. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." The man who is thus abased, and knows that if he gets his deserts it will be utter and eternal separation from God, is not likely to be in a mood to complain of God if he sends him poverty and sorrow, disease and death.

Secondly, Job understood and felt as he had not done before, that God's ways are past finding out, that his government is altogether too vast and complicated to be understood in all its parts by man. With this conviction it was not needful for him to

* Job xlii. 2—6.

know the *why* and *wherefore* of every stroke of the chastening rod. Let him only know that God reigneth, that all things, great and small, are governed by him, and that he dealeth with his people as a father dealeth with his children, and the most sober reason will dictate that he should say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

And so will it be with us. Clouds and darkness may cover the reasons of the Divine procedure from our eyes. But with faith in the Fatherly government of our God, we shall be able in all our afflictions to say, as the deaf and dumb child replied when asked why he was born deaf and dumb, "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight."

"Shall he, whose birth, maturity, and age,
Scarce fill the circle of one summer day,
Shall the poor gnat, with discontent and rage,
Exclaim that nature hastens to decay,
If but a cloud obstruct the solar ray,
If but a momentary shower descend?
Or shall frail man Heaven's dread decree gainsay,
Which bade the series of events extend
Wide through unnumbered worlds and ages without end?"

"One part, one little part, we dimly scan,
Through the dark medium of life's feverish dream;
Yet dare arraign the whole stupendous plan,
If but that little part incongruous seem.
Nor is that part, perhaps, what mortals deem:
Oft from apparent ill our blessings rise.
Oh, then, renounce that impious self-esteem
That aims to trace the secrets of the skies!
For thou art but of dust: be humble and be wise."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE EFFICACY AND INEFFICACY OF AFFLICTION.

CONTENTS.—Affliction both softens and hardens the heart—Kings of Israel—Testimony of Psalms—Of prophets—Sorrow in itself neither holy nor renewing—Symbols of death in Egypt—In Iceland—Instances of good by affliction—Conversion of Dr. George Wilson—Fitness of affliction to produce seriousness—Actual results dependent in part on knowledge—The founder of Buddhism on his way to the pleasure-gardens—Affliction ripening Christian graces—Not to be self-imposed—Madame Guyon—Hidden evils brought to light—Letter of William Rhodes—Effects on Dr. John Brown—The hand of God must be seen—Co-operation with the Divine purpose—“Come ye apart”—Communion with Christ—Verses by John Newton.

“Not only knowledge, but also every other gift, which we call the gifts of fortune, have power to puff up earth: afflictions only level these molehills of pride, plough the heart, and make it fit for wisdom to sow her seed, and for grace to bring forth her increase. Happy is that man, therefore, both in regard of heavenly and earthly wisdom, that is thus wounded to be cured, thus broken to be made straight, thus made acquainted with his own imperfections that he may be perfected.”—BACON.

“ I weep, but do not yield ;
I mourn, yet still rebel :
My inmost soul seems steeled,
Cold, and immovable.

“ The wound is sharp and deep ;
My spirit bleeds within ;
And yet I lie asleep,
And still I sin, I sin.

“ My bruised soul complains
Of stripes without, within ;
I feel these piercing pains ;
Yet still I sin, I sin.

“ Trust me with prosperous days,
I said : oh, spare the rod !
Thee and thy love I'll praise,
My gracious, patient God.

“ Thou trustedst me awhile.
Alas ! I was deceived :
I revelled in the smile,
Yet to the dust I cleaved.

“ Then the fierce tempest broke.
I knew from whom it came :
I read in that sharp stroke
A Father's hand and name.

“ I said, My God, at length
This stony heart remove :
Deny all other strength,
But give me strength to love

“ More moulded to thy will,
Lord, let thy servant be,
Higher and higher still,
Liker and liker thee.”

THE EFFICACY AND INEFFICACY OF AFFLICTION.

INCONSISTENT as the assertions seem to be, that affliction turns men to God and that it does not, that sorrow softens the heart and that it hardens it, yet both are true, and are clearly mirrored by that truest of books the book of God.

Of one king of Israel we are told that "in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the Lord: this is that king Ahaz. For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him: and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me. But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel."* But a few pages farther on in the same history we read of a king quite as wicked as Ahaz, who shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another, and who made Judah to err and to do worse than the heathen. "And the Lord spake to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not hearken. Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before

* 2 Chron. xxviii. 22.

the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him: and he was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God."*

We find the writer of the 78th Psalm reviewing the history of his nation, and remarking on the varied and contradictory courses pursued by them under the judgments of God. "The wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel. For all this they sinned still, and believed not for his wondrous works." But it was not so in every instance. "When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and inquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their Rock, and the high God their Redeemer." These "rememberings," however, were often short-lived and sometimes insincere. "They did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant."

Isaiah is instructed to declare it useless to inflict more chastisement on a people who had already been chastised so often in vain. "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more."† "The people turneth not unto Him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of hosts. Therefore the Lord will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and rush, in one day."‡ But yet the prophet says likewise, "When thy judgments are in the earth, the

* 2 Chron. xxxiii. 10—13.

† Isa. i. 5.

‡ Isa. ix. 13.

inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." And his contemporary, Hosea, delivers a message from the Most High in which the efficacy and inefficacy of affliction are asserted together; in which the people are represented as fleeing from God in the day of their calamity, and yet brought to him in penitence by renewed and repeated judgments. "When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian; . . . yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound. For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, even I, will tear and go away; I will take away, and none shall rescue him. I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early." And then Ephraim or Israel is represented as saying, "Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up."*

The prophet Jeremiah recognises in the same manner the efficacy and inefficacy of affliction. Speaking of the people of Jerusalem, he says, "Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return."† But he represents Ephraim, humbled by chastisement and sorrow, bemoaning himself thus: "Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God.

* Hos. v. 13—15; vi. 1.

Jer. v. 3.

Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth."*

All this is true to nature and to fact. Affliction does produce contrary effects; nor need we wonder. The very gospel of the grace of God, itself the best, the purest of all things, while its end is salvation, and while it is Divinely adapted to accomplish its end, is often, through men's obstinacy, the savour of death unto death, and not of life unto life. How much more may we expect that affliction should send men farther from God instead of bringing them nearer; should blunt their sensibilities, or turn them into rebellion against their Maker. Sorrow has no goodness of its own. It has neither intrinsic virtue nor intrinsic vice. The descriptions which are often given of it, as something noble and sacred, if not even Divine, are not consistent with truth. What is there noble or sacred in the weeping and wailing of the lost? and yet there is no sorrow like unto their sorrow. Equally untrue are the descriptions which are often given of its power to elevate, if not even to regenerate men. It is spoken of as the great purifier. The world is now in a furnace, and will come out of it as gold refined seven times. Alas! that we should have so little evidence to justify such an expectation. The world is indeed in a furnace. In mercy, as well as in judgment, has it been cast therein. And the furnace is sometimes heated seven times. But the sufferings to which families and nations are sub-

* Jer. xxxi. 18, 19.

jected, often severe and protracted, utterly fail to melt or refine. If sorrow had any power of its own to purify the soul, hell would be the sure road to heaven, and it would cease to exist when it had performed its last work of regeneration. The furnace would be put out, there being no more dross to be purged nor gold to be refined.

Sorrow is not in itself a holy thing, nor does it possess a renewing power. "Fire," it has well been said, "will inflame straw, soften iron, or harden clay: its effects are determined by the object with which it comes in contact. Warmth develops the energies of life or helps the progress of decay. It is a great power in the hothouse, a great power also in the coffin: it expands the leaf, matures the fruit, adds precocious vigour to vegetable life; and warmth, too, develops with twofold rapidity the process of dissolution." So, too, with sorrow. There are spirits in which it produces the principle of life: there are others in which it prematurely hastens the consummation of irreparable decay. You will find persons who seem to be under the influence of religion so long as they enjoy health and prosperity, but whose religion, such as it is, fails and even dies under affliction. Their happiness, when basking in the sunshine of God's gifts, has no more of moral character in it than has the happiness of a bird singing its carol in the fresh morning air; and therefore, when the blessings they prize so much, and to which they almost fancy they have a right, are taken from them, they regard themselves as badly treated. "Rebellious feelings arise: they become bitter,

discontented. The temper that was smooth becomes rugged and uneven: the benevolence that expanded upon all narrows into selfishness." Their course is downwards, into that death to all that is good which the sorrow of the world is sure to work.

The moral history of Pharaoh is that of multitudes. They are arrested by the presence of some Divine judgment. They are awed, perhaps alarmed, and resolve to enter on a new course. The judgment is removed, the visible hand of God is withdrawn, the Divine voice is silenced; and then old desires, old habits, old aims, reassert their power and regain it. They are again awakened by a louder voice, and smitten by a severer stroke, and again, and more fervently than before, they make vows of reformation, and cry to be spared this once, and they will obey God's will. They are spared, the judgment is withdrawn; but again their fervour cools, their vows are forgotten, and not God's will, but their own, continues to be the law of their life. All this is repeated a third time and a fourth, and always with the same result. And yet not the same. The voice has become louder each time to awaken them, and the stroke more severe; and the slumber into which they sink has become each time more deep, and the resistance of their will to God's will more strong. And thus they sink into a spiritual stupor, which is too deep and strong to be disturbed by any earthly judgment. Or, if they are startled out of it by some sharp, sudden, overwhelming stroke, like the destruction of the first-born, it is only to realize the desperate position into which they have brought

themselves, and to perish like Pharaoh in a last act of rebellion against Him under whose mighty hand they would not be humbled.

The ancient Egyptians had coffins brought into their festive halls, but the presence of that memento of the grave did not check their mirth or their indulgence. We are told by a recent traveller that the first thing you see when you enter a church in Iceland is the coffin which is prepared for the man who, while living, occupies the pulpit; but we have no reason to believe that that spectacle makes the preacher more solemn or the people more devout. During the Great Plague in the metropolis, when the death-cross marked many a closed house and the death-cart was constantly parading the streets, the solemn call, "Bring out your dead," was often intermingled with shouts of revelry and laughter; the dead and the dying were plundered, and a heartless dissipation was rife. "How impossible did I at one time find it to believe," says Mrs. Schimmelpenninck, "that one distinguished alike for his talent and his infidelity in our own circle, should have designedly spent the last hour of his beloved wife's mortal agony in a play-house, and sought in a pantomime the solace he could not find in that Christianity from which he turned away. But now I perfectly understand it. My heart has received a deep lesson that calamities can be received only in two ways. Either the spirit must soar far above all mutabilities to heavenly peace, whilst the soul and body are thus strengthened to receive the chastening from a Father's hand, or else they must be met by stupifying the soul in indiffer-

ence, hardening the heart in rebellion, or sharpening the spirit in acrimony against God and man."

But happily the instances are very many in which affliction has been blessed by God, both as the means of bringing men to himself in humble penitence and faith, and as the means of purifying his people and strengthening and increasing their graces.

Of instances of the former character, in which the storms of life have driven men to seek the shelter and shadow of the great Rock, few are more striking or more instructive than that of Dr. George Wilson; and all the more instructive that his piety was very eminently a religion of love, and not of fear.

George Wilson was no prodigal in his youth, no riotous liver. From his boyhood he felt an interest in Divine things. His early letters indicate a deep reverence for God and a groping after him. Educated in an enlightened Christian family, he understood the doctrines of the gospel. "But his great want," says Dr. Cairns, "was the power to realize the value of the gospel remedy, from his heart having been greatly set on literary and scientific eminence. God took his own way to abate this hindrance, by sending ill-health, and thwarting all his plans of rapid elevation;" and in a great crisis of his life he made haste to seek God.

"I was required," he wrote, years after the event, "to prepare on very short warning for the loss of a limb by amputation. A painful disease, which for a time had seemed likely to yield to the remedies employed, suddenly became greatly aggravated, and I was informed by two surgeons of the highest skill,

who were consulted on my case, that I must choose between death and the sacrifice of a limb, and that my choice must be promptly made; for my strength was fast sinking under pain, sleeplessness, and exhaustion. I at once agreed to submit to the operation, but asked a week to prepare for it; not with the slightest expectation that the disease would take a favourable turn in the interval, or that the anticipated horrors of the operation would become less appalling by reflection upon them; but simply because it was so probable that the operation would be followed by a fatal issue, that I wished to prepare for death, and what lies beyond it, whilst my faculties were clear and my emotions comparatively undisturbed; for I knew full well that, if the operation would be followed by death, I should be in a condition in the last degree unfavourable to making preparation for the great change." This was the decision and act of a wise man.

Spiritual progress and enlightenment had been observable some time before. God had been leading him step by step into the wilderness, that he might plead with him there. The week of delay granted by the surgeons passed slowly, yet swiftly, away. A small Testament was his constant companion, and every available moment up to the coming of the surgeons was devoted to its perusal. For very life he searched, like Bunyan's Pilgrim, for "life, life, eternal life." Adverting to these circumstances, he said in a letter to a friend some time after, "When I was recently struggling in a great fight of afflictions, soul and body racked and anguished, my life hanging in the balance, and eternity in prospect, I

prayed to God for light and help, and my prayer was heard and answered."

The morning of the operation arrived, and found him with a trembling hope in Christ. During the operation his senses were, he says, preternaturally acute. "The black whirlwind of emotion, the horror of great darkness and the sense of desertion by God and man, bordering close upon despair, which swept through his mind and overwhelmed his heart," he could never forget. But the mental sufferings thus described by himself were the uncontrollable result of physical anguish, and were but for a moment. A few days after, his friend, John Cairns, "the ministering angel of his sick chamber," was able to announce that in the mind of the sufferer all was peace and joy. And before the expiry of a month the sufferer himself could write, "It pleased God, who speaks to some with the still small voice of gentle persuasion, to address me in the whirlwind and the storm, and to vouchsafe me, in the prospect of sore trial, a calmness, even a serenity and patience, which could have been supplied me from no other source. I look back on the last month with wonder and speechless gratitude, and place my reliance for the future on the same mighty Arm which wrought my deliverance from past affliction." Recalling the trial eleven years after, he wrote, "This season always comes back to me as a very solemn one; yet if, like Jacob, I halt as I walk, I trust that, like him, I came out of that awful wrestling with a blessing I never received before; and you know that if I were to preach my

own funeral sermon, I should prefer to all texts, 'It is better to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched.' "

After he was gone from among men, his trial and its fruits were thus described. "He came forth with a spirit strengthened from heaven, to bear the life-long burden of a feeble body, and to accept life on the most disadvantageous terms, as a blessed and Divine ministry. The inward man had gained infinitely more than the outward man had lost; and with all his originally noble qualities exalted, there was found a humility, a gentleness, a patience, a self-forgetfulness, and a dedication of life to Christian ends and uses, which henceforward made every place and work sacred."

George Wilson survived the loss of his foot nearly seventeen years, during which he may well be described as sitting under the shadow of the great Rock; not in luxurious enjoyment and indolence, for no man was a harder worker than he; nor sitting there only occasionally, to go forth when refreshed to battle anew with the storm; but habitually enjoying its protection and grateful shade; so that in every affliction he felt himself under shelter and in safety.

In this and similar cases,* we can see the fitness of affliction as a means of spiritual good; we can see what trains of thought it is fitted to suggest, and what emotions it is fitted to excite. When brought

* For other illustrations of this subject see "The Divine Life," Part III. pp. 262-282.

face to face with death, as George Wilson was, the false halo which makes earthly things attractive and fascinating vanishes away, and we see the world with its pleasures and possessions in all their naked emptiness. Gold is no longer wealth, but so much sordid dust. Honours are no longer substance, but shadow. The soul must find other good than the world's gift, or it will prey upon itself.

When thus brought face to face with death, moreover, what so natural as to think of that which follows death? In health, and amidst engrossing occupation, men may live without thoughts of a future state, may even amuse themselves and exercise their ingenuity in discussions respecting it. But when sickness and death come, trifling and speculative amusement must give place to earnest decision. Once for all it must be settled how the soul shall render an account of itself to God, and how it shall be prepared to spend eternity in a condition that is subject to no change. And hence it comes to pass that "the God their light proud hearts denied, their grief-worn hearts adore."

Do we wonder that in the presence of death the thoughtless should become thoughtful, the callous be moved, the wavering decided, the profligate abandon their vices, and the godless turn unto Him that made them? The wonder is, that it should ever be otherwise; that any should be found toiling to draw water out of cisterns which have been proved to be broken and empty; that any who have been awakened out of sleep by some loud providence should still mistake the cloud-land of their own dreams for solid ground;

that any whose idols have been ground to powder by affliction, as was the golden calf by Moses, should still seek after other idols instead of turning to the Lord their God. But so it is. By disease, by the apparent approach of death, by bereavement, by the loss of property, by disappointment, by some other ill, they are made conscious of wants which earthly good cannot satisfy. And with such a consciousness we might expect that, as the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so their souls would pant after the living God. But no. They do not turn from the world's emptiness to God's fulness. Rather will they lie down and perish in their thirst. That all do not pursue this perverse and suicidal course must be ascribed to the grace of God: that many do must be ascribed to the intense earthliness and ungodliness of the human heart.

But, at the best, all that suffering, whether experienced by one's self or witnessed in others, has any fitness to accomplish, is to make the sufferer sensible of the world's insufficiency, and to urge him in quest of comfort and good which the world cannot supply. But what course the man will pursue whose dreams of earthly happiness have passed away like the morning cloud, depends on circumstances, and chiefly, under the Divine blessing, on the knowledge which he possesses of "the way to the Father." Without such knowledge the sorrows of this life often drive men into solitude and asceticism; a notable example of which we have in the founder of Buddhism. The story may be fact or fable: in either case, it furnishes an apt illustration of this point.

While brooding over, and dissatisfied with, the doctrines of Brahminism, Prince Siddhartha issued one day from his palace attended by a numerous retinue, for the purpose of recreation in the royal pleasure-gardens, and encountered on the way an old man in the last stage of decrepitude—bald, wrinkled, emaciated, with teeth few and shaking, with voice harsh and hoarse—who was painfully supporting his trembling steps upon a staff. “Who is this man?” said the Prince to his attendants; “and these his infirmities, are they peculiar to him, and to his family? do they belong to others? are they common to all?” The answer was such as the question was designed to elicit. “These, O Prince, are the ordinary infirmities and sufferings of age: all are subject to them, great and small; your own parents and kindred will not be exempt from them.” “Let us return quickly,” said the Prince: “what have I to do with pleasure, for whom is reserved the sad sequel of age?” Four months afterwards he was again proceeding with his escort to the pleasure-garden, when he beheld a helpless wretch, exhausted with burning fever, squalid and lean, expecting the agonies of death, unattended, unrelieved. Siddhartha put to his followers the like question as before, and received a like response. “Let us return,” said he: “what wise man can rejoice in his health, when he has before him the spectre of coming disease?” A third time he set forth on the same excursion, when he met with a corpse upon a bier, around which the relatives of the dead were uttering their lamentations. “Alas,” exclaimed Siddhartha, “for the

youth of man, so soon succeeded by age ! Alas, for his health, which is the prey of so many diseases ! Alas, for his life, which is so quickly closed in death ! Let us return, and reflect upon a method of deliverance."

But he had no one to teach him the true method of deliverance. And the fourth time that he took the road to the pleasure-garden, he met a religious mendicant, a novitiate, not yet thirty-five years of age, with downcast eyes, calm, self-possessed, not without grace, as he held forth the beggar's dish. "This is one," was the reply to the inquiry of the Prince, "who has renounced the pains and pleasures of passion, who has undertaken to overcome himself : quenching all desire of possessing, he lives upon alms." "It is well," said the Prince : "this is the path recommended by so many sages, and which leads to peace." Vanity of vanities this way of peace has proved. But affliction of itself teaches nothing better. And men, disgusted and sickened by the world, have in all ages and countries rushed blindly into the only mode of renouncing the world which their darkened minds could imagine.

Affliction is not only the means of turning men to God, but also of maturing the fruits of righteousness in the character of Christians. God chastens his children, that they may be partakers of his holiness. And among all the experiences of ancient saints there is none which modern believers find more frequently reproduced in themselves than that which is recorded thus : "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes. I

know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.”

But that affliction may be a blessing to us, a means of stronger faith, of purer love, of more devotedness, of more holiness, it must be laid down as a first principle that it is not to be self-imposed. The furnace, to be the means of refining our character, of separating the dross from the gold of our new nature, must not be kindled and heated by our own hands, a mistake into which multitudes have fallen.

In the early stages of Madame Guyon's life she practised the greatest austerities in the hope of attaining greater holiness thereby. But she afterwards learned a better way; and then one of the gravest charges brought against her was, that she did not value self-imposed penance as she ought. “Is it,” said Bossuet to her—“is it a mark, madam, of Christian lowliness, to disregard the principles and practices which have been sanctioned by the wisdom and piety of many ages? In your ‘Short Method of Prayer’ there are some expressions which seem to imply that the austerities and mortifications which are practised in the Catholic church are not necessary.” “I admit,” she replied, “that my views and practices differ in this particular from those of some other persons. I cannot say that I do now, with the views which I have of the power and applications of faith, attach that importance to austerities and practices of physical mortification which I once did. My view now is this: Physical sufferings and mortifications, which tend to bring the appetites into subjection, and to restore us in that respect to harmony with God,

are of great value ; they are a part of God's discipline, which he has wisely instituted and rendered operative in the present life : but then they should not be self-sought or self-inflicted, but should be received and submitted to as they come in the course of God's providence. In other words, crosses are good ; our rebellious nature needs them ; not those, however, which are of merely human origin, but those which God himself makes and imposes."

The practices which Madame Guyon thus rejected are grounded on the idea that bodily suffering is in itself pleasing to God, or has a direct moral influence on the soul ; and no idea has done more to corrupt the faith of Christians, notwithstanding the warning voice of the apostle Paul, who denounced it as having only a show of wisdom. We cannot insist too strongly, that pain, simply as pain, does no good ; that sorrow, merely as sorrow, has no magical efficacy. Intimate as is the connection between the body and the soul, it is not of such a character as that suffering in the one will work purity in the other. " To lacerate the flesh almost to suicide merely incapacitates it for indulgence, but does not extirpate sinful desire."

How, then, does affliction promote the spiritual good of Christians ?

First of all, perhaps, we may say, by bringing to light, to the light of their own consciousness, the spiritual evil that is in them. They do not know how weak they are, how much sin lurks in them, till they are tried. The tenor of their life may be smooth only because no storm has arisen to ruffle it. They are observant of God's law because no temptation

assails them, and acquiesce in God's will because that will has blessed them with health and plenty. And the very first effect of affliction is to disturb their equanimity and rouse them into a spirit of rebellion against God. This is more especially the case when affliction comes suddenly, and when stroke follows stroke in rapid succession; and it is perhaps more so with some kinds of affliction than with others.

The Rev. William Rhodes wrote these words of wise sympathy to one who was painfully conscious of the feelings of rebellion and impatience into which his soul, like a sea troubled by contrary winds, had been lashed by affliction: "Will it give you any comfort for me to say, though I was grieved, I was not at all surprised to hear of the desolation of your heart, and your incapacity for confiding and soothing prayer? I cannot regard it in any other light than as the natural effect of deep exhaustion of spirit, if not also of body, withered and repressed by earthly solitudes. You have indeed been long versed in them, but this sudden concentration of their forces upon you has dismayed and borne down your heart. The severest admonitory word that your case requires is, that you were not sufficiently prepared to receive such a stroke with patient and tender submission. I am fully convinced that only experience, repeated and continued, of severe and mortifying strokes of the Divine hand, can produce the right temper for receiving them. Such is our nature, even when pardoned and renewed, that the first inflictions of adversity very often do little more than call forth the evil sentiments of our hearts. Time for these severities of

affliction to operate is generally essential to our holy improvement of them. Simply as new and repugnant to our nature, they cannot be fully and gratefully yielded to at first. You have not yet had time to feel aright.

“Look a little deeper into your soul and the constitution of vital piety. Taking your case at its worst, but looking at it fairly, you will, I trust, find that you are mistaken in thinking that it is doing your heart no good, that it is an unsanctified and unprofitable affliction. If the trial, by eliciting a feeling of repugnance to the Divine conduct, gives you a more vivid perception of the evil yet remaining in your nature, there is profit. If this painful consciousness of evil, not fully detected and unveiled before, induces you to will and pray it away, if it prompts you to aspirations, however faint, after a holier state of heart, there is profit. If it should prepare you in your future days to enter into fuller sympathy with hearts afflicted in the same manner, there is tender and blessed profit. My dear friend, one of the holiest benefits of afflictive discipline is, that it reveals to us deep secrets of our moral constitution and character.

“Let me tell you one fact in the history of my own heart. It cost me unspeakable toil, prayer, and mortification, before I could feel a grateful accordance of heart with the severity of my lot. I can well and sadly remember feeling even indignant towards the blessed and only Potentate for the rigours he imposed upon me, and this, too, several years after the time when I cannot doubt that I became a Christian.

This remembrance of my own experience, painful and humbling as it is, may throw a consoling illumination over your dark and mournful state.”

Wise and true words are these. One of the holiest benefits of affliction is indeed that it reveals to us the secrets of our character. We should not know ourselves without being tried. But how much better it is that the evil should be brought to light than that it should remain unknown; how much better that the disease should come to the surface than that it should lie hidden, and impair our strength and endanger our life. Made distinctly conscious of the weakness, or the worse than weakness, that is in us, it will be our own fault and our own sin, if we do not wait on God, and receive from him the grace that will both heal and comfort us; our fault and our sin, if henceforward we be not holier and stronger than we were before.

Besides, we can trace a certain fitness in suffering to promote the spiritual good of Christians, even as we have seen a certain fitness in it to awaken the thoughtless to spiritual concern. We can understand very well how it should give Christians more vivid impressions of the solemnity both of life and of death, of the realities and responsibilities of the one, and of the momentous consequences of the other. We are at best like men whose eyes are only half opened, and who do not see things in their proper proportions and relations. Those dreams and illusions by which the worldly are blinded and ruined unhappily distort and dim the vision even of Christians;

and anything by which their spell is broken, let it be personal suffering, loss of property, or bereavement, becomes a blessing.

Seldom has a more marked change followed bereavement than in the case of the Rev. John Brown, of Biggar, and afterwards of Edinburgh. He was "in labours more abundant" in his early ministry, when his wife, to whom he was devotedly attached, was seized with a distemper which brought her by lingering steps to the grave.

His son, John Brown, M.D., records his recollections of the event, which happened when he was a child. He and his little sister were awakened by a cry of pain, sharp, insufferable, as if one were stung. "Years after," he says, "we two confided to each other, sitting by the burnside, that we thought that great cry which arose at midnight in Egypt must have been like it. We all knew whose voice it was, and, in our night-clothes, we ran into the passage, and into the little parlour to the left hand, in which was a closet bed. We found my father standing before us, erect, his hands clenched in his black hair, his eyes full of misery and amazement, his face white as that of the dead. He frightened us. He saw this, or else his intense will had mastered his agony; for, taking his hands from his head, he said slowly and gently, 'Let us give thanks,' in the room where lay our mother dead. . . .

"Then were seen in full action his keen, passionate nature, his sense of mental pain, and his supreme will, instant and unsparing, making himself and his

terrified household give thanks in the midst of such a desolation, and for it. Her warfare was accomplished; her iniquities were pardoned; she had already received from her Lord's hand double for all her sins: this was his supreme and over-mastering thought, and he gave it utterance."

The great change wrought in the sorrowing husband by his bereavement is thus described by the same pen: "My mother's death was the second epoch in my father's life; and for a man so self-reliant, so poised upon a centre of his own, it is wonderful the extent of change it made. He went home, preached her funeral sermon, every one in the church in tears, himself outwardly unmoved. But from that time dates an entire, though always deepening alteration in his manner of preaching, because an entire change in his way of dealing with God's word. Not that his abiding religious views and convictions were then originated or even altered—I doubt not that, from a child, he not only knew the Holy Scriptures, but was 'wise unto salvation'—but it strengthened and clarified, quickened and gave permanent direction to, his sense of God as revealed in his word. He took, as it were, to subsoil ploughing: he got a new and adamant point to the instrument with which he bored; and with a fresh power, with his whole might, he sunk it right down into the living rock, to the virgin gold. His entire nature had got a shock, and his blood was drawn inwards, his surface was chilled; but fuel was heaped all the more on the inner fires, and his zeal burned with a new ardour: indeed, had he not found an

outlet for his pent up energy, his brain must have given way, and his faculties have either consumed themselves in wild, wasteful splendour and combustion, or dwindled into lethargy.

“The manse became silent: we lived and slept and played under the shadow of that death, and we saw, or rather felt, that he was another father than before. He went among his people as usual when they were ill; he preached better than ever—they were sometimes frightened to think how wonderfully he preached—but the sunshine was over, the glad and careless look, the joy of young life and mutual love.

“What we lost, the congregation and the world gained. He gave himself wholly to his work. He changed his entire system and fashion of preaching: from being elegant, rhetorical, and ambitious, he became concentrated, urgent, moving (being himself moved), keen, searching, unswerving, authoritative to fierceness, full of the terrors of the Lord, if he could but persuade men. The truth of the words of God had shone out upon him with an immediateness and infinity of meaning and power which made them, though the same words he had looked on from childhood, other and greater and deeper words.”

From the time of this loss, John Brown, already a Christian and a Christian minister, was in many respects a “new man,” a man of intenser devotion to his God and to his work. And if the intensity which now characterized him was subject to any drawbacks, these must be ascribed to the frailty of our nature and the peculiar constitution of the in-

dividual. The stroke which wounded so deeply the heart of the young minister at Biggar, contributed much to make him the great and good man that he was all the two-and-forty years of his after life.

We offer a third remark on this subject. We must see the hand of God in our afflictions if we would have them do us good. We may be able to trace them to the action of natural laws, and the operation of social circumstances; but we must look beyond the things that are seen, to the things which are not seen, beyond nature and society, to God; we must know that the Father of our spirits is disciplining our spirits, if we would have our pains and sorrows to make us partakers of his holiness.

The secondary cause of our affliction is sometimes wrapt in mystery, undiscovered if not undiscoverable; a new thing, it may be, which the researches of science have not penetrated; and then our minds revert more readily to the great First Cause of all, the invisible Power which governs all, and are awed in his presence. But when the secondary cause is a very obvious one, one with whose operation all the world is familiar, we are prone to rest in the knowledge of it without looking beyond. We can see the rod which has struck us, we can account for the stroke on natural principles, which we can name and describe, and we are apt to content ourselves without thought of the invisible hand by which the rod was wielded.

The difficulty of looking beyond the seen is still greater when we suffer by the negligence or fault of

others; and this is no uncommon thing. More attention on the part of our dependants, more consideration on the part of our neighbours, more skill on the part of our physician, might have prevented the occurrence of what costs us much suffering, might, perhaps, have saved us a life which was as dear to us as our own. And we naturally dwell in our thoughts and conversation on what would have been if dependants and neighbours and physicians had only done what they might. We may cherish no resentment towards those who are, to some extent, the faulty authors of our suffering; but so long as our minds are thus occupied we shall derive no real profit from our sorrow.

Greater still is the difficulty when the fault by which an affliction has been occasioned is not one of negligence or ignorance, but of design, when a fellow-mortal has intentionally and deliberately done us a great wrong. "O my dear friend," a Christian minister of great eminence wrote to me, when his reputation was maliciously assailed, "may God preserve you from such a trial as the one through which I have been, and am still passing. It is a very bitter one. The two great supports under it are, and great they indeed are, a good conscience and the throne of grace. I have no fear about the ultimate issue. The darkness will pass. May the trial prove beneficial to both pastor and people! But how different are trials direct from God, and coming by the instrumentality of men! What a distracting of the mind between the Divine agent and the human instrument!"

But the greater the difficulty the more urgent is

the necessity of looking beyond a mere secondary or instrumental cause. In the case of injury done to us by design and malice, we are in danger of yielding to wrathful passion. We feel perhaps, that we do well to be angry, and our deceitful hearts are soon hurried across the border which separates a righteous anger from a vindictive resentment. Would we be saved from thus inflicting injury upon ourselves, would we reap profit even from the trial which stings us to the quick, we must pause and reflect that this too cometh from the Lord of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working. He is in no sense the Author of the evil intention and design of the wrong-doer : on the contrary, he marks and will punish the sin. But he has had a design of his own toward us in permitting the wrong-doing ; a design, we may be sure, of mercy.

The counsel of Lord Bacon is good : "Learn of David to leave Shimei and call upon God : he hath some great work to do, and he prepareth you for it : he would neither have you faint, nor bear this cross with a stoical resolution." Bearing it meekly, and seeing the Divine hand in it, the profit to our souls may be true and lasting ; but without seeing the Divine hand in it we shall have neither profit nor peace. We shall be either crushed or hardened by it, perhaps embittered and exasperated, if we do not feel and acknowledge that "affliction cometh not forth of the dust," but is sent by God. Then alone shall we be disposed to "seek unto God" in our troubles, and able to understand the words, "Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth : there-

fore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty : for he maketh sore, and bindeth up : he woundeth, and his hands make whole.”

In order to profit by affliction, let it be remarked further, that we must make it our study to turn it into a means of spiritual good. While we are passive as to the afflictions themselves, we must not be passive as to the ends which they are designed to accomplish. The corn is passive in receiving good from alternate sunshine and shower. The oak is passive in its growth amid the storms which threaten to rend it. The land of Egypt is passive in the annual enriching of its soil by the waters of the Nile. But where mind and heart are concerned we must not be passive. We must concern ourselves that both the sunshine and the shower, the calm and the storm, may do us good. By our indifference and inattention, a season which is fraught with blessing may pass over us without leaving one lasting salutary impression on our spirits ; whereas by devout thought and prayer it might yield us a wealth of spiritual good that would make it for ever memorable.

The Lord of providence often says to his people what he said to his disciples of old : “ Come ye apart into a desert place, and rest awhile.” We have been busy in the world, perhaps in the church—not more busy than we ought to be—but he sees the need our spirit has of rest, of reflection, of contemplation, of devotion. He wills that we should lay down our tasks, and go to commune with himself in retirement. The place whither he leads us, the sick-bed, the

house of mourning, is to the eye of sense a desert. There is no beauty in it. No flowers grow there. No birds sing there. It is a wilderness, sometimes a howling wilderness. To the eye of sense, we say, it is a desert. But it may be made a paradise, the fairest, loveliest, happiest, fruitfulest spot we have ever dwelt in ; and now brought thither by the great Master, let it be our concern to see that it is.

Thus called into retirement and to thought, we have first to commune with our own hearts. We have been so busy with our hands, it may be, that we have been too much strangers to our hearts. We have been cultivating the vineyards of others so diligently that we have possibly neglected our own. And our first communion with self may be anything but pleasant. We may discover a mixture of motives in our most earnest works of faith, a mixture of good and evil in our holiest living, which will satisfy us how much need there was that the great Refiner should put us into the furnace.

But communion with one's self would be miserable work, if we were not privileged to commune with Christ in this desert place. He has called us apart for awhile, that he may teach us and sanctify us, that we may "recover strength," spiritual strength, before we return to the duties and temptations of life. And now, apart from the world, with Christ in our solitude, let us open our ears to his voice ; yea, let us open our hearts, that himself may come in to us. Let not the door be barred against him by our deafness or insensibility. We "use no other friend so ill," and there is no other friend to compare with

him. He loves us in our sickness and sorrow as does no other; and his presence can impart a peace, and inwardly work a good, which we can derive from no other source. Oh, let us not lose the precious moments of this season of rest! Let us commune with Christ.

This is possible for us in various ways. We have a book which records his words and his acts, his sorrows and his joys; and by reading and meditating on these we place ourselves in the position of those privileged ones who saw the works and heard the words of the Son of God while on earth. We can enter into the innermost circle of his disciples, and gaze with them on his glory when his face did shine as the sun and his raiment was white as the light, and we can gaze with them on his humiliation in the garden, when he was in an agony, and his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood. We can take our place with them in the upper chamber, and hear him say, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions. He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. It is expedient for you that I go away. I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever. I am the true Vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." These, and many such blessed sayings as these, we shall hear in that upper

chamber, and listening we shall feel that this is none other than the house of God and the gate of heaven. Our communion is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

But not in such ways as these alone are we privileged to commune with Christ in the retirement into which he has brought us. "He that loveth me," said Christ, "shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." "My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." This is something more inward and more direct than the communion which we enjoy with him by meditation on his words. We commune with Paul and John when we read their writings and receive their thoughts into our minds; but there is nothing personal in this communion on their part: they are altogether unconscious of it. But when we commune with Christ it is a present, personal thing. He is even more conscious of it than we are. He knows our thoughts, feelings, and desires; but we do not know his, and the fact of the communion is made known to us only by its fruits. These are mainly peace, and strength, and holiness. We are transformed into his image, and are made more and more like him by his Holy Spirit.

To realize this happy result must be our concern. We must not leave it to a peradventure to determine whether our affliction shall produce the fruits of righteousness or not. The Lord never says to us more urgently than when he takes us apart from the world, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." He gives us that standing encourage-

ment to do so: "It is God that worketh in you, to will and to do of his good pleasure." "Behold the throne of grace." This promise draws us near. If our hearts yearn over our children to do them good, much more will our Father in heaven give us the Holy Spirit in our time of need.

The season of affliction is both a seed-time and a harvest. God is breaking up the fallow ground, and casting good seed into it. And, by Divine grace, so rapid may be the growth that no summer needs to intervene between the seed-time and harvest. "The ploughman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes the sower of seed." Such a time is very precious, and should be improved.

Precious to the earth as is the mid-day sun, its glare is not so favourable to thought as is the solemn twilight and the more solemn midnight. We are dazzled by the brightness of the sun: we are awed by the stars which shine in the vault of night. In our enforced retirement in times of sorrow the sun is, as it were, shut out with its bewildering glare and excitement. Oh, let us see to it that we so ponder God's dealings with us as to become holier and more spiritual! Let our chamber be the death-place and the burying-place of sin; and let us come forth from it with a truer estimate of heaven and earth, of the soul and of the body, of things eternal and things temporal, and with a more earnest purpose that, living or dying, we shall be the Lord's.

"I asked the Lord that I might grow
In faith, and love, and every grace;
Might more of his salvation know,
And seek more earnestly his face.

"'Twas he who taught me thus to pray,
And he, I trust, has answered prayer;
But it has been in such a way
As almost drove me to despair.

"I hoped that in some favoured hour
At once he'd answer my request,
And by his love's constraining power
Subdue my sins and give me rest.

"Instead of this, he made me feel
The hidden evils of my heart,
And let the angry powers of hell
Assault my soul in every part.

"Yea, more : with his own hand he seemed
Intent to aggravate my woe!
Crossed all the fair designs I schemed,
Blasted my gourd, and laid me low.

"Lord, why is this? I trembling cried :
Wilt thou pursue thy worm to death?
'Tis in this way, the Lord replied,
I answer prayer for grace and faith.

"These inward trials I employ
From self and pride to set thee free!
And break thy schemes of earthly joy,
That thou may'st seek thy all in me."

CHAPTER IX.

DOMESTIC BEREAVEMENTS.

CONTENTS.—The Redeemer's dominion over the invisible world—
Plutarch to Apollonius—Quintilian on the death of his son—
Cicero on the death of his daughter—Death in the South Seas—
Aaron—Eli—David—Henry Venn on death of his wife—Bishop
Daniel Wilson—His little Ann—His William—Rev. Legh
Richmond—Illness of his wife—Supposed shipwreck of his son
Nugent—Death of Wilberforce Richmond—Death of Nugent—
Verses by Mrs. Barrett Browning.

“Amongst consolations it is not the least to represent to a man's self like examples of calamity in others. For examples give a quicker impression than arguments; and, besides, they certify us, that which the Scripture also tendereth for satisfaction, ‘that no new thing has happened unto us.’ This they do the better, by how much the examples are liker in circumstances to our own case; and more especially if they fall upon persons that are greater and worthier than ourselves.”—BACON.

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.”—1 PET. iv. 12.

“ There is no flock, however watched and tended,
But one dead lamb is there :
There is no fireside, howsoe'er defended,
But has one vacant chair.

“ The air is full of farewells to the dying,
And mournings 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.

“ There is no death ! what seems so is transition :
This life of mortal breath
Is but a suburb of the life Elysian,
Whose portal we call Death.

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

LONGFELLOW.

DOMESTIC BEREAVEMENTS.

“THE Redeemer’s dominion over the invisible world” is the great theme on which John Howe discoursed, in the last year of the seventeenth century, to comfort parents who were mourning over a Christian son of high promise. The dispensation which filled them with grief was gloomy on one side, he said, “namely, downwards, and towards this wretched world, this region of sorrow and darkness; but on the side upwards,” he continued, “and towards that other world which casts its lustre upon it, its phasis and appearance will be altogether bright and glorious. And the more you look by a believing intention into that other world where our blessed Redeemer and Lord bears rule in so transcendent glory, the more you will be above all the cloudy darkness of this event of Providence towards yourselves and your family.”

“How far,” said Mr. Howe to the bereaved parents whom he would comfort, “should paganism be outdone by Christianity, which exhibits to our view death abolished, life and immortality brought to light, by Jesus Christ in the gospel; which sets before us all the glories of the other world in a bright representation; which, if we believe, that faith will

be to us the substance of what we hope for, and the evidence of what we see not! Thus, though you saw not the kind reception and abundant entrance of this son of your delights into the everlasting kingdom, it will yet be a thing evident to you, and your faith will render it a great and most substantial reality. Pagans had but obscure glimmerings of such things; and in such afflicting cases, when they occurred, comparatively lank and slender supports, yet such as were not to be despised. Should I transcribe what I find written in the way of consolation by Plutarch to Apollonius, upon the loss of a son, you would see what would give both instruction and admiration. He tells his friend a story—the meaning whereof is more considerable to us than the credit of it, as perhaps it was to him—concerning two Grecian youths, Cleobis and Biton, whose mother having a duty to perform in the temple of Juno, and the mules not being at hand, in the instant when she expected them, to draw her chariot thither, they most officiously drew it themselves; with which act of piety their mother was so transported that she made her request to Juno on their behalf, that if there were anything more desirable unto mortals than other, she would therewith reward her sons; who thereupon threw them into a sleep, out of which they awaked no more; thereby signifying that death was the best gift that could be bestowed upon persons of such supposed piety as they!”

But few of the ancient heathens could comfort themselves with even such “glimmerings” of light and hope as these words indicate. For the most

part they sorrowed as those that had no hope. The enlightened Quintilian thus wrote on the death of a son :—

“I had a son whose eminent genius deserved a father’s anxious diligence. I thought that if—which I might fairly have expected and wished for—death had removed me from him, I could have left him, as the best inheritance, a father’s instructions. But by a second blow, a second bereavement, I have lost the object of my highest hopes, the only comfort of my declining years. What shall I do now? Of what use can I suppose myself to be, as the gods have cast me off? It happened that when I commenced my book on the ‘Causes of Corrupt Eloquence’ I was stricken by a similar blow. It would surely have been best then to have flung upon the funeral pile—which was destined prematurely to consume all that bound me to life—my unlucky work and the ill-starred fruits of all my toils, and not to have wearied with new cares a life to which I so unnaturally clung. For what tender parent would pardon me if I were able to study any longer, and not hate my firmness of mind, if I, who survived all my dear ones, could find any employment for my tongue, except to accuse the gods, and to protest that no Providence looks down upon the affairs of men? If I cannot say this in reference to my own case, to which no objection can be made except that I survive, at least I can with reference to theirs, condemned to an unmerited and untimely grave.

“Their mother had before been torn from me, who had given birth to two sons before she had com-

pleted her nineteenth year; and though her death was a cruel blow to me, to her it was a happy one. To me the affliction was so crushing that fortune could no longer restore me to happiness. For not only did the exercise of every feminine virtue render her husband's grief incurable, but, compared with my own age, she was but a girl, and therefore her loss may be accounted as that of a child. Still my children survived, and were my joy and comfort, and she, since I survived (a thing unnatural, although she wished it), escaped by a precipitate flight the agonies of grief. In my younger son, who died at five years old, I lost one light of my eyes. I have no ambition to make much of my misfortunes, or to exaggerate the reasons which I have for sorrow: *would that I had means of assuaging it!* But how can I conceal his lovely countenance, his endearing talk, his sparkling wit, and (what I feel can scarcely be believed) his calm and deep solidity of mind? Had he been another's child he would have won my love. But insidious fortune, in order to inflict on me severer anguish, made him more affectionate to me than to his nurses, his grandmother who had brought him up, and all who usually gain the attachment of children of that age.

“Thankful therefore do I feel for that sorrow in which but a few months before I was plunged by the loss of his matchless, inestimable mother; for my lot was less a subject for tears than hers was for rejoicing. One only hope, support, and consolation, had remained in my Quintilian. He had not, like my younger son, just put forth his early blossoms, but

entering on his tenth year had shown mature and well-set fruit. I swear by my misfortunes, by the consciousness of my unhappiness, by those departed spirits, the deities who preside over my grief, that in him I discerned such vigour of intellect, not only in the acquisition of learning (and yet in all my extensive experience I never saw it surpassed), such a zeal for study, which, as his tutors can testify, never required pressing; but also such uprightness, filial affection, refinement, and generosity, as furnished grounds for apprehending the thunder-stroke which has fallen. For it is generally observed that a precocious maturity too quickly perishes; and there is I know not what envious power which deflowers our brightest hopes lest we soar higher than human beings are permitted to soar. Such promise did he give of future excellence; but he possessed also the far higher qualities of constancy, earnestness, and firmness to bear sorrow and resist fear. With what admiration did his physicians contemplate the patience with which he endured a malady of eight months' duration! What consolation did he administer to me in his last moments! When life and intellect began to fail, his wandering mind dwelt on literature alone. Oh, dearest object of my disappointed hopes, could I behold thy glazing eyes, thy fleeting breath! could I embrace thy cold and lifeless form, and live to drink again the common air! Well do I deserve these agonizing thoughts, these tortures which I endure!"

With the sorrows of Quintilian over the grave of

his last son, unrelieved by Christian hope, may be compared the sorrows of a writer of equal eminence, a more profound thinker, but a Christian, over the grave of his only son.

“How melancholy it is to behold him,” said John Foster, while his son yet lived, “thus evidently sinking under the fatal pressure! And I am anxiously concerned that his dear mother, in her feebleness of body, with a spirit habitually tending to droop, and so long oppressed and almost exhausted by care, and vigilance, and hopelessness for him, should not also be reduced to such debility as would become serious illness.”

Such was Mr. Foster's own constitutional tendency to melancholy that, but for the hopes and consolations of the gospel, he would have sunk down into a despair quite equal to that of the Roman father. And yet, five days after the decease of his son, he wrote, “John has left us now (all but his wan and insensible form), no more to return. The last complete sentence he uttered was, ‘I know that my Redeemer liveth.’ This was near the close. He retained his faculties till within the very last hour, then about midnight seemed to sleep, and expired, I believe, without the sense of suffering. . . . My interest in the accumulation of valuable books in this room will be sensibly lessened by the extinction of the anticipation of their being hereafter a source of instruction and gratification to him. He needs now no such means of knowledge. And how many things by this time he knows which no books can tell! Late in his illness he mentioned it as one of the pleasing circum-

stances in the idea of the superior world, that knowledge will beam into the soul without the slow labour of difficult acquisition."

Philosophy afforded no support to Cicero in the hour of trial, when his beloved daughter Tullia was taken away by death. His grief seems for a time to have been so violent as almost to affect his intellect; and it was long before he recovered sufficient tranquillity to derive any enjoyment from society, or to engage with zest in his ordinary occupations. He withdrew to the small wooded island of Astura, where, hiding himself in the thickest groves, he could give way to melancholy thoughts without restraint. Gradually he so far recovered as to be able to draw up a treatise on Consolation, and found relief in a variety of plans for a monument in honour of his lost one.

Of Cicero's treatise on Consolation only a few fragments survive. But we know the sort of consolation with which, and with which alone, he was acquainted, from a letter which was addressed to him in the hour of his sorrow, by one of the greatest and best men of his time, Servius Sulpicius, and by Cicero's reply to his friend. The former letter we give entire; and, though long, it deserves to be read, that the Christian may see how very little the *all* is which a heathen philosopher can say to comfort a bereaved father.

"I received," wrote Sulpicius, "the news of your daughter's death with all the concern it so justly deserves; and, indeed, I cannot but consider it as a misfortune in which I bear an equal share with yourself. If I had been near you when this fatal accident

happened, I should not only have mingled my tears with yours, but assisted you with all the consolation in my power. I am sensible, at the same time, that offices of this kind afford, at best, but a wretched relief; for as none are qualified to perform them but those who stand near us by the ties either of blood or of affection, such persons are generally too much afflicted themselves to be capable of administering comfort to others. Nevertheless, I thought proper to suggest a few reflections which occurred to me upon this occasion; not as imagining they would be new to you, but believing that in your present discomposure of mind they might possibly have escaped your attention. Tell me then, my friend, wherefore do you indulge this excess of sorrow? Reflect, I entreat you, in what manner Fortune has dealt with every one of us; that she has deprived us of what ought to be no less dear than our children, and overwhelmed, in one general ruin, our honours, our liberties, and our country. And, after these losses, is it possible that any other should increase our tears? Is it possible that a mind long exercised in calamities so truly severe should not become totally callous and indifferent to every event? But you will tell me, perhaps, that your grief arises not so much on your own account as on that of Tullia. Yet, surely, you must often, as well as myself, have had occasion in these wretched times to reflect, that their condition by no means deserves to be regretted whom death has gently removed from this unhappy scene. What is there, let me ask, in the present circumstances of our country, that could have rendered life greatly

desirable to your daughter? What pleasing hopes, what agreeable views, what rational satisfaction, could she possibly have proposed to herself, from a more extended period? Was it in the prospect of conjugal happiness in the society of some distinguished youth? as if, indeed, you could have found a son-in-law amongst our present set of young men worthy of being intrusted with the care of your daughter! Or was it in the expectation of being the joyful mother of a flourishing race, who might possess their patrimony with independence, who might gradually rise through the several dignities of the state, and exert the liberty to which they were born in the service and defence of their friends and country? But is there one amongst all these desirable privileges of which we were not deprived before she was in a capacity for transmitting them to her descendants? Yet, after all, you may still allege, perhaps, that the loss of our children is a severe affliction; and unquestionably it would be so, if it were not a much greater to see them live to endure those indignities which their parents suffer.

“I lately fell into a reflection which, as it afforded great relief to the disquietude of my own heart, may possibly contribute likewise to assuage the anguish of yours. In my return out of Asia, as I was sailing from Ægina towards Megara, I amused myself with contemplating the circumjacent countries. Behind me lay Ægina, before me Megara: on my right I saw Piræus, and on my left, Corinth. These cities, once so flourishing and magnificent, now presented nothing to my view but a sad spectacle of desolation.

‘Alas!’ I said to myself, ‘shall such a short-lived creature as man complain when one of his species falls by the hand of violence or by the common course of nature, whilst in this narrow compass so many great and glorious cities, formed for a much longer duration, thus lie extended in ruins? Remember, then, O my heart, the general lot to which man is born, and let that thought suppress thy unreasonable murmurs.’ Believe me, I found my mind greatly refreshed and comforted by these reflections. Let me advise you in the same manner to represent to yourself what numbers of our illustrious countrymen have lately been cut off at once; how much the strength of the Roman Republic is impaired, and what dreadful devastation has gone forth throughout all its provinces! and can you, with the impression of those greater calamities upon your mind, be so immoderately afflicted for the loss of a single individual—a poor, little, tender woman—who, if she had not died at this time, must in a few fleeting years more have inevitably undergone that common fate to which she was born?

“Reasonable, however, as these reflections are, I would call you from them awhile, in order to lead your thoughts to others more peculiarly suitable to your circumstances and character. Remember, then, that your daughter lived as long as life was worth possessing, that is, till liberty was no more; that she lived to see you in the illustrious offices of prætor, consul, and augur; to be married to some of the noblest youths in Rome; to be blessed with almost every valuable enjoyment; and, at length, to

expire with the Republic itself. Tell me, now, what there is in this view of her fate that could give either her or yourself just reason to complain. In fine, do not forget that you are Cicero, the wise, the philosophical Cicero, who were wont to give advice to others; nor resemble those unskilful empirics who, at the same time that they pretend to be furnished with remedies for other men's disorders, are altogether incapable of finding a cure for their own. On the contrary, apply to your private use those judicious precepts you have administered to the public. Time necessarily weakens the strongest impressions of sorrow; but it would be a reproach to your character not to anticipate this, its certain effect, by the force of your own good sense and judgment. If the dead retain any consciousness of what is here transacted, your daughter's affection, I am sure, was such, both to you and to all her relations, that she can by no means desire you should abandon yourself to this excess of grief. Restrain it then, I conjure you, for her sake, and for the sake of the rest of your family and friends, who lament to see you thus afflicted. Restrain it, too, I beseech you, for the sake of your country; that, whenever the opportunity shall serve, it may reap the benefit of your counsels and assistance. In short, since such is our fortune, that we must necessarily submit to the present system of public affairs, suffer it not to be suspected that it is not so much the death of your daughter as the fate of the Republic and the success of our victors, that you deplore.

.. "But it would be ill manners to dwell any longer

upon this subject, as I should seem to question the efficacy of your own good sense. I will only add, therefore,—as we have often seen you bear prosperity in the noblest manner and with the highest applause, show us likewise that you are not too sensible of adversity, but know how to support it with the same advantage to your character. In a word, let it not be said that fortitude is the single virtue to which my friend is a stranger.

“As for what concerns myself, I will send you an account of the state of this province, and of what is transacting in this part of the world, as soon as I shall hear that you are sufficiently composed to receive the information. Farewell.”

These consolations—and Sulpicius knew no better and no higher—were of no avail. The idea so much expanded and insisted upon as one of comfort, only added to the sorrow of the afflicted father. The ruin, as they regarded it, of their common country, only rendered Cicero more dependent on the happiness which he once found in his home, and that happiness was now blighted. “As for myself,” he replied to his friend, “after having been stripped of those dignities you mention, and which I had acquired by the most laborious exertion of my abilities, I had only one consolation remaining; and of that I am now bereaved. . . . Whilst I was endeavouring to reconcile my mind to a patient endurance of those ills, there was one to whose tender offices I could have recourse, and in the sweetness of whose conversation I could discharge all the cares and anxiety of my heart. But this last

fatal stab to my peace has torn open those wounds which seemed in some measure healed. For I can now no longer lose my private sorrows in the prosperity of the commonwealth, as I was wont to dispel the uneasiness I suffered upon the public account in the happiness I received at home."

We are transported to an altogether different region of thought from that in which Quintilian, and Sulpicius, and Cicero dwelt, when we read such words as these: "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. 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."* "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then

* 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18; v. 1.

we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”*

But “these words” are of heaven, not of earth, and have nothing to compare with them in the words of “the wise and philosophical” of Greece and Rome. *Their* words were not sufficient to comfort themselves or one another. They left the gloom of death and the grave as dense as they found it.

If the sentiments of enlightened heathen men were such as we have seen, need we feel any surprise that the unenlightened should give way to the most violent expressions of frantic despair? To this day such expressions are witnessed in lands which are not blessed with the light of the gospel, strangely enough even in lands where human life is held of little value and is sacrificed on the slightest occasions. Describing what he was familiar with during a long residence in the islands of the Pacific, Dr. Turner says, “Whenever the eye is fixed in death the house becomes a scene of indescribable lamentation and wailing. ‘O my father, why did you not let me die, and you live here still?’ ‘O my brother, why have you run away, and left your only brother to be trampled upon?’ ‘O my child, had I known you were going to die! Of what use is it for me to survive you? Would that I had died for you!’ These and other doleful cries may be heard: two

* 1 Thess. iv. 13-18.

hundred yards from the house ; and, as you go near, you find that they are accompanied by the most frantic expressions of grief, such as rending garments, tearing the hair, thumping the face and eyes, burning the body with small piercing fire-brands, beating the head with stones till the blood runs, and this they call an offering of blood for the dead."

How different the scenes which are witnessed in times of bereavement when the hopes of the gospel are known and enjoyed ! The saints of even older dispensations, before the full light of the gospel was shed on the condition and prospects of mankind, knew enough to enable them to "kiss the rod" and bow to the will of their Father in heaven.

The circumstances in which Aaron lost his sons were most painful, but he "held his peace." Those in which Eli was bereaved were of the same character ; but when informed of the desolation which was to overtake his house, he said, "It is the Lord : let him do what seemeth him good." The faith of Job acquiesced still more cordially in the will of God when he was told that he was childless : "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord." Few stories are more touching than that of David weeping over the couch of his dying child ; and in no words can it be told with so much simple pathos as in those of the Bible narrative : "The Lord struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick. David therefore besought God for the child ; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the

earth. And the elders of his house arose, and went to him, to raise him up from the earth: but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them. And it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died. And the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead: for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice: how will he then vex himself, if we tell him that the child is dead? But when David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead: therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead. Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat. Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child, while it was alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread. And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? *I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.**

Of modern examples of hopeful resignation, and sometimes even of joy, in the hour of bereavement, the number cannot be reckoned. The following do

* 2 Sam. xii. 15—23.

not differ in any material respect from cases which are of constant occurrence in Christian families. And if the reader will compare the sentiments of Henry Venn and Legh Richmond and others, with those of Quintilian and Cicero, he cannot but recall the words, "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined."*

In 1767, the Rev. Henry Venn, of Huddersfield, lost his wife after a brief illness. She was an eminent Christian, and her end was peace. "I can speak good, even now, of my Master's name," said Mr. Venn to a friend three days after her departure. "I have as certain a view of my wife's glory as if it was a vision. But I must not expect such an amazing support will last long. If it please Jesus, my God, be it so! My God, in Gethsemane and on the cross, will at once silence and support my helpless soul."

A few weeks later, he wrote, "It is said of Israel, returned from Babylon, 'When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.' But that one who has lost the wisest counsellor, the ablest guide of his family, the most pleasing companion, the most affectionate wife; lost her when all that, as a Christian minister, I ought most to love was increasing in her; when her experimental knowledge of the salvation of God had opened her mouth to speak so charmingly of his name; when her children just began to be struck with her excellence: that in such circumstances as these I should be for joy as

* Isa. ix. 2.

one that dreams, is amazing indeed to myself, and must seem absolutely incredible to the world! And had I not precedents and examples of the same rich grace, I should be ready to say, even whilst all my blessed wife's excellences, and all her love for me, are indelibly impressed on my heart, that I had not a just affection for her.

“ But when I read the account of a Mr. Tennant, in New England, preaching at the grave of a much-beloved wife; of Mr. Shaw, a minister of the last age in Leicestershire, who has described his feelings at the time he was committing two most dear children to a grave which he was forced himself to dig in his own garden (they dying of the plague), and hear him say, he desires to leave it upon record, that God is all-sufficient even at such an hour as that, and in the midst of so great a calamity: when I consider these things, I can only wonder that such grace should ever be conferred on one who has sinned, and does sin, every breath he draws!

“ My happiness springs from such an evidence of my wife being in glory as amounts almost to sight; so that I can engage in no religious exercise, but she is, as it were, an additional spur to engage in it with all my might.

“ I feel my debt to my God enlarged in all his favours towards that other part of myself. I with gratitude adore him, for the precious loan of so dear a child of his, for ten years and four months, to be my wife. I think over, with much delight, the many tokens of love from God during the time of her pilgrimage, and the consolations which refreshed and

rejoiced her soul upon the bed of death. I consider her as delivered from the evil to come, and in the possession of all I have been begging of God for her ever since we knew each other. Every degree of peace, of light, of joy, I feel in Jesus, immediately suggests the infinitely exalted sensations of the same kind which enrapture her spirit. And above all, I have now to praise my Master that I have an experimental proof that he giveth songs in the night; that, when dearest comforts are taken away, the light of his countenance, a little brighter view of his great salvation, a little stronger feeling of the tenderness of his heart, is more than a recompense for every loss we can sustain. I can now say, from proof, 'Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.' "

To another friend he wrote about the same time, "Since the moment she left me I can compare my sense of her being with the Lord to nothing but vision; it is so clear, so constant, so delightful! At the same time, the Lord gives me to see his own infinite beauty, and to feel more and more his preciousness, as a Fountain of living waters to those who are bereft of earthly joys. And well it is that I am so supported! For his own cause I cannot but conclude the Lord does it, since, immediately upon my unspeakable loss, the opposers cried out, 'Ah, now you will see what will become of his vauntings of

the power of faith and the name of Jesus!’ They knew our great happiness, and they said, ‘You will see your vicar just like any one of us in the same situation!’ But my God heard and answered; so that, when I was mightily helped by him to preach the very Sabbath after her death, and not many hours after her interment, their mouths were stopped, and the little flock of Jesus, who had been praying for me with all fervour and affection, say they have not had so great a blessing since I have been amongst them.”

In 1818, the Rev. Daniel Wilson, afterwards Bishop of Calcutta, lost a beloved child of great promise whose beautiful character endeared her to all who knew her. It was the first visit of death to his family, and it was painfully sudden. In the morning, the child was declared by the medical attendant to be in no danger: in the evening, she was a corpse. Her father had taken her on his knee, and with no feeling of apprehension said to her, “Little Ann must put her trust in Jesus Christ: Papa is praying to Jesus Christ for little Ann,” when she gave one sigh and breathed her last.

The first agony of the bereaved mother was intense, and for the moment she refused to be comforted. But there was no murmuring against God; and her mind soon returned to its habitual frame of submission and resignation to his holy will. On the following day, the bereaved father wrote to a friend, “How can I tell the distressing event? We have lost our sweet daughter Ann. She died last night in

my arms, and has taken our hearts with her; or rather, may she have drawn them more closely to that Saviour into whose bosom she has fled. She was ill only a few days. Oh, my friend, what a stroke is death! We desire to lie in our Saviour's hands, and pray for that holy and beneficial use of affliction which he alone can grant. I know all is right. I pray for grace to kiss the hand of my chastening Father. I see more than enough need for this and every other cup of sorrow; and I wish and strive to turn to my Saviour's love, as the solace of the sorrowing heart.”

The wound occasioned by the death of “little Ann” was yet unhealed when it pleased God again to visit him. His youngest child, William, was seized with alarming illness, and became a source of great and long-continued anxiety. The father himself shall tell the sad tale, as he told it to Mrs. Hannah More in June, 1818: “It is impossible for me to describe what we are going through. After the sudden death of one child—a lovely girl about six years and a half old—a second child has been seized with sickness, and has now continued for above seven weeks in a most affecting and alarming state. We are watching our dear little boy dying before our eyes. He has been for eight days in perpetual convulsions, except as opiates compose for a time his agitated frame. The afflicted mother hangs over her suffering child with an anguish I cannot describe. Thus it pleases our heavenly Father to exercise us with by far the most severe trial we have ever known.

“For myself, as a minister of the sanctuary, I am

quite assured that God 'in very faithfulness has caused me to be troubled.' I want bringing down. The natural tendency of my mind is towards excessive activity and bustle, with all the secret love of display and the praise of men which accompanies such a turn of character. I have now gone on seventeen years in the sacred ministry with a large share of health and spirits, and with some success in the great work of 'reconciliation' intrusted to me. Some late circumstances, in which I had however very little personal effort, have brought me still more before the public eye; and now my heavenly Father chastens me for my profit, that I may be partaker of his holiness. He takes me aside from my public duties to private self-examination. He calls me from preaching to praying, from the instruction of others to the instruction of myself. He bids me look inward, and take the gauge and measure of my heart. He commands me to be silent and contrite and interior in my religion. He is preparing me for comforting, perhaps, the minds of others with the comfort wherewith I myself am comforted of God, and whilst he confines me to the chamber of sorrow, is perhaps fitting me in some better manner to discharge those high and elevated duties of a steward of the mysteries of God which I have so little honoured as I ought. Oh that I may learn softness, compassion, humility, and tenderness, in this school of suffering!"

The illness of this dear child lasted for some months, and at length the conviction was forced upon the minds of the anxious parents that his intellect would be permanently clouded. It was too true.

The little boy grew up an object of solicitude and tender sympathy, to the age of five years, and then gently passed away. When this occurred his mother was absent, but her husband announced the tidings to her by letter: "I am sure you will be prepared for any tidings about our dear William which it may please God to send. We have both felt long the extreme uncertainty of his health, and the sudden changes which might take place at any moment. Do not therefore, my love, be grieved overmuch when I tell you that the dear babe is taken from the troubles and afflictions of this world, to be a glorified and happy spirit before the throne of his Saviour and Redeemer. When I wrote to you yesterday I was under no kind of alarm whatever, and fully believed he would have been as well as usual to-day. However, about five o'clock this morning the sweet little fellow breathed his last without a sigh or groan. Everything has been done that could be done; but it was God's will. The dear child is now an angel before the throne of God and the Lamb. Our prayers for him have been answered in the way God has seen best."

To a friend he wrote soon after, "The feeble lamb is now safe in the bosom of the heavenly Shepherd, and with expanded and unobstructed powers is now singing his praise above. Every year on earth would have increased the pain arising from his intellectual deficiency, and the anguish of our anticipations for his future comfort. God has seen fit to provide for him in the best manner. Thus have three children been removed, and one-

half of our little flock transmitted to the heavenly pastures. May we so nourish the remainder as to fit them by their Shepherd's grace for the same Divine glory."

Fifteen years later, when he was Bishop of Calcutta, one of his sons died in the Pyrenees; but how the Bishop felt on the occasion we are not informed. How he felt, however, when this son brought on him sorrows more bitter than that of death we are informed. So amiable was John Wilson's character as a boy, that his grandfather said of him, "If ever any one could have made me doubt the corruption of human nature, it would have been John Wilson." But the very geniality which made him so beloved rendered him the easy prey of wicked companions. In the midst of the affliction which was thus brought on the father we find him writing, "I know I have your prayers. I have found it exceedingly hard to bear up under this affliction, which, during the last two months, has been threatening me. I mean that I find submission, resignation, hope, patience, active and calm exertion, hard. I find faith, love, repose in God, hard. Indeed, I do not know when I have suffered more from inward temptations of various kinds than during this season. Satan has come in like a flood, and in ways I could least expect. Still I hope that my deliberate judgment is, that 'God is my refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.' I know he cannot do but what is right with me. I know his grace can magnify itself in the most imminent perils. I know that my own sins as a man, a parent, and a minister,

deserve far more than I have suffered. I know that this dispensation is designed to humble, teach, and purify. How can I fail to preach more feelingly to sinners, when I have such a memento in my own house?"

To the same friend he wrote soon after, "My poor, poor boy, I have sent abroad, as you know. God Almighty have mercy and bring to himself the alienated mind of this sinful prodigal." This prayer, it is hoped, was answered. Five years after, the wanderer died, apparently a penitent and pardoned man. "Tell my father," he said to his brother who had hastened to him on hearing of his illness, "that I die a true penitent. The great burden on my conscience is my horribly, horribly vile conduct towards my father! I bless God for this affliction. Less than this would not have brought me to him." On receiving such a message the father's joy must have preponderated far over his sorrow. He could say, "My son was dead, and is alive again; was lost, but now is found."

The Rev. Legh Richmond, whose "Annals of the Poor" have instructed and comforted multitudes, passed through much domestic sorrow, and has left in letters to his friends the record of his experience in the midst of great tribulation. When most honoured and useful in his ministry, death threatened to enter his house and lay its hands on the partner of his days. She believed herself to be dying, and bade farewell to all the members of her family. A friend who was privileged to enter what

seemed to be the chamber of death, was struck with the expression of joyful feeling on the countenance of the wife, and with the calm and delightful serenity on that of the husband. He could not help exclaiming, he says, "Is this the chamber of death?" Death was so stripped of its terrors, and religion so surrounded with all its consolations, that the place looked more like the portals of heaven than the gloomy vestibule of the tomb. The triumph of faith in the dying wife seemed to support the otherwise afflicted husband, and to impart to him a corresponding elevation of feeling. He forgot for the moment his own sorrows in her joys, his own loss in her gain; and did not wish to arrest her flight to the world of happy spirits, or indulge in sorrow, while she was rejoicing in the mercies of redeeming love.

"If this conduct of Mr. Richmond should excite surprise in any of our readers," says his biographer, "let it be remembered that he was in the habit of estimating everything by its reference to eternity; and that, tenderly as he was attached to his wife, and sensible of the importance of her life to himself and to his children, still the consciousness of her assured happiness was evidently the absorbing feeling of his mind at that time. God also gives extraordinary support under extraordinary trials, 'a martyr's grace in a martyr's sufferings.' 'There is a time for all things.' Nature and grace have their feelings, and there is a season for the lawful expression of both. The removal of the wife would doubtless have filled with the greatest sorrow that heart which now

exulted in her triumphant prospects. The husband would weep, while the Christian rejoiced 'with joy unspeakable and full of glory.' "

Contrary to all human expectation, the symptoms of the disorder abated, and her life was spared. It seemed as if she had entered into the valley of the shadow of death, explored all its secret recesses, penetrated to its utmost confines, and seen the light which alone could dispel all its darkness; and then, led by the hand of Him who says, "I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal," she once more turned to the days of her pilgrimage and survived, to follow to the grave the husband who, thirteen years before, had resigned her to the will of God.

The eldest son of Mr. Richmond well-nigh broke his father's heart before he was sixteen years of age, and then went to sea in a merchant ship destined to Ceylon. From different ports which were visited in the course of the voyage, Nugent Richmond wrote letters to his father in which he expressed deep regret for his past conduct and a hope that he might one day prove a comfort to his parents. About sixteen months after, his ship, the *Arniston*, was wrecked in a dreadful gale near the Cape of Good Hope, and among the names of the six persons who escaped a watery grave that of Nugent Richmond was not found. The hearts of the parents were overwhelmed with grief. The family went into mourning, and the father sorrowed for his lost child with a sorrow unmitigated by the communication of any cheering intelligence as to the state of his son's mind and his fitness for so sudden a change.

“ ‘The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away,’ the mourning father wrote to a friend; ‘blessed be the name of the Lord.’ But here is our hope and consolation. Nearly eighteen years’ prayers had been unceasingly offered up for the welfare of his soul, and I believe that none of those prayers were unavailing.”

Three months afterwards, a letter was delivered to Mr. Richmond in the handwriting of the very son whom he mourned as dead, announcing that he was alive, that circumstances had prevented his setting sail in the *Arniston*, of whose fate he seemed to be ignorant, and communicating details of his present engagements and prospects! The transition of feeling to which the receipt of this letter gave rise produced an effect almost as overwhelming as that which the report of his death had occasioned. The family mourning was laid aside, and Mr. Richmond trusted he might recognise, in this signal interposition of Divine Providence, a ground for hope that his child’s present deliverance was a pledge of that spiritual recovery which was now alone wanting to fill up the measure of his gratitude and praise.

Before Nugent Richmond was taken away, his brother Wilberforce was removed, to the great sorrow of his parents, but in circumstances which likewise imparted to them great joy. The name which his son bore was a grateful memorial of the obligations which the father felt to the author of the book to which, under God, he owed his own conversion. And Mr. Richmond’s hope was, that his

son should be spared to preach the glorious gospel, when he was gathered to his fathers. But this hope was disappointed. Symptoms of consumption showed themselves, and after various alternations between hope and fear, the invalid who had been sent to Scotland for change of air was brought to his father's home at Turvey without any visible amendment. The wasted form, the hectic look, the sunken eye, and the increasing difficulty of respiration, all denoted that the hour of dissolution was at hand. He looked like a tender flower nipped in the bud; but it was a flower soon to bloom in the paradise of God. His Christian graces had been gradually unfolding, and his mind carried through a state of anxious inquiry and close examination, till it was able to rest in full confidence on the grace and mercy of God in Christ Jesus. He discovered the most earnest desire for satisfaction both as to the ground of his hope and its necessary evidence.

“Thanks be to God,” wrote the father immediately after his son's death, “grace, peace, and mercy have been so abundantly inscribed upon the whole of this affecting transaction, that I ought solely to be occupied in songs of praise to God, for all his goodness to me and mine. The delightful enlargement of heart, the liberty of tongue, the humiliation of soul, the affectionate tenderness, the sweet serenity of mind, the dignity of sentiment, the laboriously acquired intimacy with the Scriptures, the earnestness to speak to, exhort, and comfort, each and every individual, the devotional spirit, the clearness of doctrinal views, and their blessed appli-

cation in imparting solid peace and comfort in the prospect of dying, all of which illustrated and adorned his latter end, were beyond my most sanguine expectation: it was, and shall be, matter for joy and gratitude.

“ We have now found letters, some of them near four years old, and others written while he was in Scotland, beautifully descriptive of his state of mind; while the conversations—close, deep, and searching—which I enjoyed with him during his last fortnight, produced the most convincing demonstrations that he had been ripening for glory beyond our thoughts and imagination. For a season he was reserved towards me relative to personal feelings; but at length, of his own accord, he broke out like the sun from behind a cloud, and light diffused itself over the whole moral and spiritual landscape.

“ It was gratifying to me to find that the humiliation of his spirit was precisely such as I particularly wished to see it. For four or five days previous to the arrival of my wife and Fanny, God so mercifully ordered it that he should say everything to me, and I to him, which I could possibly have wished. Our whole souls, on almost every topic of feeling, opinion, confidence, faithful dealing, and unreserved affection, were mutually opened. Oh, they were sweet days! The pressure of weakness, disease, and pain, often afterwards interrupted our lengthened communications; but sweeter and brighter still were the intervals of ease and short conversation. Many witnessed his lovely testimonies, and none can ever forget them.

“ One of the most remarkable circumstances attend-

ing him was his secret and deep exercise of heart and study of the Scriptures, beyond my own supposition, owing to his reserve and silence. I saw much that I loved and admired, but I was not aware of the half. Our feelings are much tried in proportion to the endearing nature of our past and recent intercourse. But, as he often said, 'I know whom I have trusted, and this relieves and consoles me.' He was deeply impressed with the idea that his removal was designed for the spiritual good of others. I think it is manifest already in more instances than one. The whole village has been much in prayer and weeping for some weeks past, and the tenderest affections have prevailed throughout: it is a season of much love."

While Mr. Richmond was visiting the Isle of Wight in August, 1825, to recover the shock which his health and spirits had sustained from the death of his son Wilberforce, some indistinct rumours reached him respecting that of his son Nugent. He had received communications from him stating his intention to revisit England, and declaring that the two happiest days of his life would be, "first, when he should see again his dear parents, after so long an absence; and the second, when he should be weaned from the danger of temptation."

But Nugent did not live to see his native land and the parents whom he longed to embrace.

"The circumstances attendant upon our dear Nugent's end are few and simple," wrote Mr. Richmond to one of his daughters. "You are aware what a long series of favourable accounts of his general behaviour we have had from a variety of quarters.

You should know that, from at least five religious friends, I have received highly satisfactory testimonies of his religious feelings and principles, although he was modest and reserved in speaking of himself. His affection for his relatives was very strong: his principles of honourable conduct, integrity, pecuniary accuracy, official diligence, kind manners, and moral deportment, were exemplary. He lived in much esteem, and died much beloved. Dear boy! he was snatched from our embraces at the hour of his returning to them. He is buried in the depths of the ocean; but the sea shall give up her dead, and I trust he will then appear a living soul."

How glorious the triumph of that gospel which enables those whom affliction has visited with desolating and overwhelming force, to rejoice that God lives, that God is unchanging; and to say with one that cried "out of the depths,"—

"Whatever's lost, it first was won:
We will not struggle nor impugn.
Perhaps the cup was broken here
That Heaven's new wine might show more clear.
I praise thee while my days go on.

"I praise thee while my days go on:
I love thee while my days go on:
Through dark and death, through fire and frost,
With emptied arms and treasure lost,
I thank thee while my days go on."

CHAPTER X.

DOMESTIC BEREAVEMENTS

(CONTINUED).

CONTENTS.—Foster's description of this dying world—The world's consolations—Christian consolations—Dr. George Lawson—Loss of a daughter—Of a son—Of another daughter—"He bowed his head and worshipped"—Dr. John Morison—An infant—His son James—Joseph—Alexander—His only daughter—Letters—Henry Martyn and his sisters—Review of these histories—Letter of John Foster—Verses by Bernard of Clugny.

"Men lop the branches of their trees round about, to the end they may grow up high and tall: the Lord hath this way lopped your branch in taking from you many children, to the end you should grow upward, like one of the Lord's cedars, setting your heart above, where Christ is at the right hand of the Father. What is next, but that your Lord cut down the stock after he hath cut down the branches? Prepare yourself: you are nearer your daughter this day than you were yesterday. While you prodigally spend time in mourning for her, you are speedily posting after her. Run your race with patience: let God have his own, and ask of him, instead of your daughter, whom he hath taken away from you, the daughter of faith, which is patience; and in patience possess your soul. Lift up your head: you do not know how near your redemption doth draw."—SAMUEL RUTHERFORD.

" I weep, but not rebellious tears ;
I mourn, but not in hopeless woe ;
I droop, but not with doubtful fears :
For whom I trusted, Him I know.
Lord, I believe : assuage my grief,
And help, oh help my unbelief !

" My days of youth and health are o'er ;
My early friends are dead and gone ;
And there are times it tries me sore
To think I'm left on earth alone :
But yet faith whispers, ' 'Tis not so :
He will not leave nor let thee go.'

" Blind eyes, fond heart, poor soul, that sought
For lasting bliss in things of earth ;
Remembering but with transient thought
Thy heavenly home, thy second birth ;
Till God in mercy broke at last
The bonds that held thee down so fast.

" As link by link was rent away,
My heart wept blood, so sharp the pain ;
But I have learned to count this day,
That temporal loss, eternal gain ;
For all that once detained me here
Now draws me to a holier sphere :

" A holier sphere, a happier place,
Where I shall know as I am known,
And see my Saviour face to face,
And meet, rejoicing round his throne,
The faithful souls made perfect there
From earthly stains and mortal care."

Mrs. SOUTHEY.

DOMESTIC BEREAVEMENTS

(CONTINUED).

“THE records of time,” said John Foster, “are emphatically the records of death. A whole review of the world, from this hour to the age of Adam, is but the vision of an infinite multitude of dying men. During the more quiet intervals, we perceive individuals falling into the dust through all classes and all lands. Then come floods and conflagrations, famines and pestilence, and earthquakes and battles, which leave the most crowded and social scenes silent. The human race resemble the withered foliage of a wide forest: while the air is calm we perceive single leaves scattering here and there from the branches; but sometimes a tempest or a whirlwind precipitates thousands in a moment. . . . Who is that destroying angel whom the Eternal has employed to sacrifice all our devoted race? Advancing onward over the whole field of time, he hath smitten the successive crowds of our hosts with death; and to *us* he now approaches nigh. Some of our friends have trembled, and sickened, and expired, at the signals of his coming; already we hear the thunder of his wings; soon his eye of fire will throw mortal fainting on all our companies, his prodigious form will to us

blot out the sun, and his sword sweep us all from the earth: 'for the living know that they shall die.'"

No wonder that another essayist, the author of "Friends in Council," should speak of all the metaphors and similes which have been used to set forth the futile and miserable state of man on the earth as coming short of the reality, and should see in the very consolations of men only the depth of their misery. "What are the consolations of men," he asks—"of all, at least, but pious men?" It was well to make this exception; for while in the consolations of worldly men "may be discerned the depth of their misery," in the consolations of Christian men we see the rich grace and mercy of the God whom they serve. John Foster, who wrote that dark description of this dying world which we have just quoted, could write likewise, "The firm persuasion that all things that concern us are completely every moment in the hands of our Father above, infinitely wise and merciful; that he disposes all these events in the best possible manner; and that we shall one day bless him amid the ardours of infinite gratitude for even his most distressing visitations: such a sublime persuasion will make the heart and the character sublime. It will enable you to assemble all your interests together, your wishes, your prospects, your sorrows, and the circumstances of the persons that are dear to you, and present them in one devout offering to the best Father, the greatest Friend; and it will assure you of being in every scene of life the object of his kind perpetual care."

This is no mere theory, but the happy experience of multitudes who have enjoyed consolations which have not mocked their woes, but have soothed and strengthened their hearts.

Dr. George Lawson was a man of great learning and Christian worth, and, for thirty-three years, held the office of Professor of Theology in one of the Presbyterian Churches of Scotland. He was the father of three sons and five daughters, three of whom died before himself. The first death in his family was that of Charlotte, a child for whom he had cherished a peculiarly warm affection; and his own account of the event shows how devoutly he submitted to the Divine hand even amidst some uncertainty as to the spiritual preparedness of the child.

“Charlotte,” he wrote after her death, “was a great favourite with us all: her understanding and memory were beyond her years; she showed a great degree of anxiety for religious knowledge; and I had every reason to believe that there was some good thing in her heart towards the Lord God of Israel. I had no apprehensions that she was so near her latter end. I had never put such questions to her as might have given me the satisfaction of judging how far the good things I observed and knew to be in her might be ascribed to her natural disposition; though her love to her Bible and to hymn-books, and to many other pious books suitable for children, gave me great reason to hope that she possessed the distinguishing qualities of a child of God, as far as could be reason-

ably expected from one of her tender years. When I found that she was dying, and could not be sure that she could hear or understand anything I said, I had my only refuge in the Hearer of prayer. I reflected bitterly on myself that I had not done more for her soul; and what could I now do for my poor Charlotte? Yet I was persuaded that God would still do for her what might be wanting to prepare her for a better state of being. Many were the petitions that I offered up, and many were the passages of Scripture from which I endeavoured to extract comfort. It gave me much relief to consider that Jesus, in the days of his flesh, never refused to comply with the solicitations of parents on behalf of their distressed children. I endeavoured to comfort myself with the persuasion that he would hear my prayers on behalf of my dear Charlotte, when I begged for her a share in that eternal life which he came to purchase for the lost.

“I think I have good reason to judge well of her. I am sure I could not have prayed more earnestly for my own salvation than I did for hers. I now wish to indulge the pleasing thought that she is with Christ, and that, if she bestows a thought on me, she pities the condition to which she must know I have been reduced by losing her. I find that general consolation is very insufficient for relieving the mind under many particular circumstances of distress; consolations, for instance, under the loss of relations, do not at all apply to my present state of mind. I can lose my relations with the fortitude that becomes a man and a Christian; but our loss is nothing: the

question is, What has become of the dead themselves? I would, indeed, rather have lost anything I possess or hope to possess, friends excepted, than my Charlotte; and yet, from the beginning of her distress to this moment, the mere loss of her has appeared to me lighter than nothing; because her eternal happiness was in question, and that she should be cut off for ever from the means of grace and opportunities for spiritual improvement, was the subject of my grief."

Fourteen years after, Dr. Lawson had to part with a son grown to man's estate, but in different circumstances. In this case, he had not the shadow of a doubt as to the spiritual condition of his child. John Lawson was a youth of bright promise, had passed through his university course with great credit, and was studying for the Christian ministry, when it pleased God to take him to himself. His death, though anticipated for some time, came at last somewhat suddenly. He was so well on the night before his death as to be able to raise the tune at domestic worship. At an early hour on the following morning, the family were called up to witness his last struggle, and to hear his last testimony to the preciousness of Jesus and the hopes of the gospel. In this conclusion of life, peace and joy characterized the faith of the youthful sufferer. After sitting for a short space in the midst of his weeping family, calm but overwhelmed, Dr. Lawson arose and said, "Oh, Mrs. Lawson, will you consider what you are about? Remember who has done this. Be composed; be resigned; and rise and accompany me down stairs,

that we may all join in worshipping our God." And so they all went down with him to the parlour. He then read out for praise these solemn verses of the 29th Paraphrase used in Scottish worship:—

" Amidst the mighty where is He
Who saith, and it is done?
Each varying scene of changeful life
Is from the Lord alone.

" Why should a living man complain
Beneath the chastening rod?
Our sins afflict us; and the cross
Must bring us back to God."

Before he raised the tune, he paused for a moment, looking round upon the weeping circle; and then, with faltering accents, said, "We have lost our singer this morning; but I know that he has begun a song that shall never end," and then proceeded with the worship, completing a scene as holy and sublime as can well be imagined.

"My beloved John," he wrote to a friend, "is torn from me during the few years that remain for me on earth, but the separation between him and me will not be nearly so long as if he had been appointed to live as long as I have already done in this valley of tears. I trust ere long to see him again with joy, and yet I wish, and I ought, to say, Whom have I in heaven but Thee?" The idea and hope of reunion had always a prominent place in Dr. Lawson's mind when sorrowing over the loss of children. "All of us would shudder," he wrote on this occasion, "at the thought of being for ever separated from him. This, indeed, is a consideration that ought to have

infinitely less influence upon our minds than the desire of being with Christ; yet I think it may be allowed a place in our thoughts. The holy writers do not always use the most powerful arguments in recommending holiness, and the weaker may sometimes be of great use when the stronger are not felt as they ought to be."

In little more than three years after this, Dr. Lawson drank of another cup filled with a similar sorrow. His youngest daughter, Jane, who had just grown into lovely womanhood, exhibited symptoms of that fatal disease which had laid her brother in an early grave. In the hope of checking its progress she was sent to reside with a brother, a Christian minister, in Lancashire. Writing to her during her absence from home, her father thus recognised the great design of affliction: "What we would rejoice to see is your face, as usual, clothed in pleasant smiles; but God knows the heart, and his pleasure lies in that holiness which has its chief place in the inner man. For this reason he sends and continues trouble, that you may be a partaker of his holiness. His eye glances through all the days of your life, and of eternity; and he considers that best for you which will be found best at the distance of many years of life or of ages in a better world. I persuade myself that you have gained more in that which is the true beauty of a Christian, than you have lost in looks, which will be still pleasant to us after all the change which sickness has made upon you; but our hope is, in a few weeks, to see your countenance renovated with health, whilst the happy effects of

your affliction continue unimpaired." This hope was not realized. "My heart is grieved," he writes to his son, "because you have not been able to give a more favourable account of my beloved daughter's health; but I have better reason if possible than Eli to say, 'It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good.' In the threatened destruction of his two wicked sons, he trembled at the thought of their awful condition under the wrath of God. I have reason to hope that our dear Jane is suffering under the hand of a gracious Father, to make her a partaker of his holiness, and to prepare her for eternal happiness."

When this beloved daughter was removed, the father said, "She has carried away a very large portion of my earthly felicity." But his loss was her gain. She slept in Jesus. "I have sometimes been afraid," he said, "of intruding into the things which I have not seen, by forming a judgment of my departed children or friends; but a well-known text satisfies my judgment, that there is no irreverence to God in taking the comfort of strong persuasion, that our departed friends are happy, where their lives have given us all the grounds for it that can ordinarily be expected.

"We are commanded not to mourn for those who have fallen asleep in Jesus like those who have no hope. We cannot improve this consolatory direction without the persuasion that our friends are sleeping in Jesus, and shall rise with him. God has chastised me sore, by removing from my eyes several children that were very dear to my heart. But it would be im-

pious and ungrateful to murmur or to call in question the goodness of Him who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for our salvation. Job blessed God when he made desolate all his company. Have not you and I reason to bless him, who spares so many children to us, and so many other rich comforts? I am afraid I have given too large a proportion of my heart to my dear children. May God determine our hearts to love himself above our dearest earthly comforts."

Thus, while tenderly sensitive under all his bereavements, he "bowed his head and worshipped." He was wont to tell his people that they should strive to rejoice in their tribulations, and finished the admonition once with these beautiful words: "The blackbird sings sweetly with the thorn at her breast, and so should God's children when passing through their trials."

One example more we shall give of a father mourning over the desolation of death, but sustained by the consolations of the gospel. The first death which took place in the family of Dr. John Morison, of Brompton, was that of an infant, fifteen months old, in 1827. In 1836, his son James was taken away in the eighteenth year of his age. The parents had hoped that this beloved child had been sanctified from the womb, but on bursting a second blood-vessel he was brought into a state of great anguish about his eternal interests. Parental prayer was heard and parental instruction was blessed to the invalid, who was enabled to receive the truth as it is

in Jesus, and who never afterwards doubted his acceptance with God through Jesus Christ.

In 1844, Dr. Morison was called to part with another beloved son, and, a few days after his bereavement, we find him writing to a friend, "In now looking back upon our sad bereavement, we see much to awaken submission and gratitude to Him who has seen fit to deprive us of one of our earthly props. We could, indeed, have wished that our dear Joseph had been spared to us, and expected rather that he should attend us to the house appointed for all living, than that we should close his eyes in death. But our God had otherwise decreed, and we can see that many important ends have been accomplished by the unexpected and afflictive providence. I trust we have been humbled and taught submission, and have learned one additional lesson on the vanity of all human hopes. We have seen, too, what grace can do to sustain the most sensitive and timid in the hour of dissolving nature; and we fondly hope that the loss of his beloved brother will be overruled to lasting benefit to our dear Alexander. But the affliction was so eminently sanctified to the departed himself, that this consideration alone ought to reconcile us greatly to the loss we have sustained. We had perceived, with some degree of pain, that the development of dear Joseph's Christian character was not in all respects so hopeful as we had been led to expect. There was less government of the temper than could have been desired, and a degree of independence of parental control which awakened feelings of occasional solicitude. Upon these mani-

festations we had been led to put the most favourable constructions, and ventured to hope that growing experience, connected with fresh outpourings of the Holy Spirit, would lead to an ultimate stability and vigour in the Christian life. But we now see, and *he* saw it fully, that a long, and painful, and mortal affliction was the process by which the God of love was to draw his poor child more closely to himself. In one of the last conversations I had with him, I remarked, 'Well, dear Joseph, you have had a long and severe discipline, but God has brought you much nearer to himself by it.' 'Yes,' said he, emphatically, 'I am sure this has been God's design in my sufferings: he saw that *nothing else would do.*' "

In 1849, death again entered the family circle. The wife of Dr. Morison's son Alexander, described as one of the loveliest of women, was in that year cut down by consumption. In 1852, Alexander himself followed her to the grave. He took cold at the Duke of Wellington's funeral, which issued in acute rheumatic fever which no medical skill could arrest.

While Alexander lay a corpse in his father's house, the intelligence arrived of the death of Dr. Morison's only daughter, the wife of Dr. James Legge, who had died at Hong Kong two months before. "I shall never forget," said Dr. George Legge, of Leicester, "the sublime resignation with which Dr. Morison bowed his head and held his peace when it was my painful duty to break to him the decease of his beloved Mary at Hong Kong." "It is indeed overwhelming to our parental feelings," wrote the smitten father, "to be thus visited. Lookers on are

stunned. We would be still, and know that Jehovah is God." To the afflicted husband of his beloved daughter he wrote, "It is impossible, where such ties exist as those which bound us and Mary together, to receive in any form the tidings which awaited us without a paroxysm of heart-rending grief. I cannot yet realize the sad thought that I shall never again in this world look upon the calm, sweet countenance of my beloved child. And truly, dear James, it has been a struggle which my poor head and feeble pen cannot depict. The sad news reached us when my dear wife and myself were overwhelmed with grief by the unexpected death of poor Alexander, when our cup of sorrow was so full that it seemed as if it could scarcely hold any more; but so it is that we have sorrowed afresh, and with an intensity of emotion as if we had not been visited before.

"What a mercy that, in these seasons of deep trial, we are called *to act!* We may feel incapacitated for it; but we should *perish* if we sat down to brood. The death of the active and the good is intended to sound the alarm in our ears: 'Work while it is day: the night cometh.' In our afflictions you and I dare not rest. The duties of arduous office press; and in your case the *family* claim upon you is intensely augmented by the removal of one who was as a presiding angel among you. Such removals, by which the heart is so deeply wounded and lacerated, are intended to impress us powerfully with God's *sovereignty*. His is the right to give and take. Thankful for his precious gifts, and for all the comfort and benediction they brought to us, let us bow, as the

children of his love, beneath his chastening hand, feeling that, though he is our Father, he is also our unerring Sovereign, and has a right, such as he will exercise, to do with us and ours as seemeth him good. I do pray and agonize that this bereavement may make me a far better man, and a far more devoted minister of the Cross. I think I have got some sweet glimpses of communion with God while his hand has been upon me; I am brought so far as to be enabled to bless his name for all that dear Mary was, both by nature and grace, and to submit without murmuring to the dispensation by which she has been recalled. All our children, once a hopeful, healthful group, are gone save one, dear, very dear to us, who is under a cloud—thank God, not a cloud of sin! And to my God I cheerfully resign those who have departed, and seek grace to bear the mysterious trial connected with the living.”

This living son, the only survivor of the happy group which had once clustered round Dr. Morison's knee, had been smitten by a sun-stroke in his own garden at Hobart Town, and was unconscious of the desolation which had fallen on his father's house.

Seldom, very seldom, do such a succession of sorrows enter a household as in this instance. But the consolations of the gospel did not fail even here. The grace of Christ was sufficient for his weeping servants. “No one could be much in Dr. Morison's society,” writes a friend, “without being convinced that he was a truly happy man. It was amazing, even amid his deepest trials, when waves and billows were going over him, how he could come up again

to the surface of the stormy sea, strong in faith, calm in spirit, and happy in his Saviour and his God."

The main secret of his strength and peace will be found in his own words, and it is one which is common to all Christians: "No man ever yet became truly resigned to God in a great and pressing calamity, who did not, in the first instance, feel the almost insurmountable difficulty of losing his own will in the act of submission to the will of God. When little distress is felt there will be, of course, but slender conviction of the need of Almighty aid. But when the sorrow of the heart 'is stirred;' when the disconsolate mourner is constrained to say, 'I am consumed by the blow of Thine hand;' when, in the bitter anguish of his soul, he is heard exclaiming, 'Hold not thy peace at my tears;' when the whole universe seems a blank to his bewildered and grief-worn spirit: then does he feel that he can only be preserved from sinking in deep waters, and from charging God foolishly, by considerations of the loftiest description, and by influences which can tranquillize and hush to rest the most disturbed and conflicting elements of human thought and feeling."

A brother's or sister's griefs are sometimes as intense as a father's or mother's. Henry Martyn may be cited as a good example. While prosecuting his holy labours in India, intelligence reached him, in 1807, of the death of his eldest sister. "O my heart, my heart," he exclaimed, "is it, can it be true, that she has been lying so many months in her

cold grave? Would that I could always remember it, or always forget it; but to think for a moment of other things, and then to feel the remembrance of it coming, as if for the first time, rends my heart asunder. When I look round upon the creation, and think that her eyes see it not, but have closed upon it for ever; that I lie down in my bed, but that she has lain down in her grave—oh, is it possible?—I wonder to find myself still in life; that the same tie which united us in life has not brought death at the same moment to both. O great and gracious God! what should I do without thee? But now thou art manifesting thyself as the God of all consolation to my soul. Never was I so near thee! I stand on the brink, and long to take my flight. There is not a thing in the world for which I could wish to live, except the hope that it may please God to appoint me some work. And how shall my soul ever be thankful enough to thee, O thou most incomprehensibly glorious Saviour Jesus! Oh, what hast thou done to alleviate the sorrows of life! And how great has been the mercy of God towards my family in saving us all! How dreadful would be the separation of relations in death, were it not for Jesus!”

Referring to the good hope which he had that his much-loved sister was with Christ, Henry Martyn wrote to a friend, “This, you will tell me, is precious consolation: indeed, I am constrained to acknowledge that I could hardly ask for greater; for I had already parted with her for ever in this life, and, in parting, all I wished for was to hear of her being converted

to God; and if it was his will, taken away in due time from the evil to come, and brought to glory before me. Yet human nature bleeds; her departure has left this world a frightful blank to me; and I feel not the smallest wish to live, except there be some work assigned for me to do in the church of God."

In the following year, Mr. Martyn received letters which informed him of the dangerous illness of that sister who had been instrumental to his own conversion to God; and they were quickly followed by an account of her death. "O my dearest S——," he began to write with a faint hope at first of the possibility of her receiving his letter, "that disease which preyed upon our mother and dear sister, and has often shown itself in me, has, I fear, attacked you. Although I parted from you in the expectation of never seeing you in this life, and although I know that you are, and have long been prepared to go, yet to lose my last near relation, my only sister in nature and grace, is a dreadful stroke." "Dearest brother," he continued to her husband, from whom he had in the meantime received a more alarming account, "I can write no more to my sister. Even now something tells me that I have been addressing one in the world of spirits. But yet it is possible that I may be mistaken. No! I dare not hope. Your loss is greater than mine, and therefore it would become me to offer consolation; but I cannot: I must wait till your next; and in the meantime I will continue to pray for you, that the God of all consolation may comfort you, and make us both, from this time, live more as pilgrims and strangers

upon the earth. In the first three years after leaving my native land, I have lost the three persons whom I most loved in it. What is there now that I should wish to live for? Oh, what a barren desert, what a howling wilderness, does this world appear! But for the service of God in his church, and the preparation of my own soul, I do not know that I would wish to live another day."

"The service of God in his church, and the preparation of our own souls," to use the words of this bruised sufferer—these do make life very precious, and should prevent all haste and impatience to be rid of life. "The preparation of our souls" for the purity of heaven, the ripening of our graces, is a great end, and none but God can determine the culture and discipline by which it may be attained. "I have before me two stones," said John Frederic Oberlin, who had suffered many bereavements—"I have before me two stones, which are in imitation of precious stones. They are both perfectly alike in colour; they are of the same water—clear, pure, and clean: yet there is a marked difference between them as to their lustre and brilliancy. One has a dazzling brightness; while the other is dull, so that the eye passes over it, and derives no pleasure from the sight. What can be the reason of such a difference? It is this: the one is cut but in a few facets; the other has ten times as many. These facets are produced by a very violent operation. It is requisite to cut, to smooth and polish. Had these stones been endued with life, so as to have been capable of feel-

ing what they underwent, the one which has received eighty facets would have thought itself very unhappy, and would have envied the fate of the other, which, having received but eight, has undergone but a tenth part of its sufferings. Nevertheless, the operations being over, it is done for ever: the difference between the two stones always remains strongly marked. That which has suffered but little is entirely eclipsed by the other, which alone is held in estimation, and attracts attention.

“May not this serve to explain,” he continues, “the saying of our Saviour, whose words always bear some reference to eternity, ‘Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted’? blessed, whether we contemplate them apart, or in comparison with those who have not passed through so many trials. Oh that we were always able to cast ourselves into his arms like little children, to draw nearer to him like helpless lambs, and ever to ask of him patience, resignation, an entire surrender to his will, faith, trust, and a heartfelt obedience to the commands which he gives to those who are willing to be his disciples! ‘The Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces.’”

It will be seen that there are times when Christians are so smitten that they cannot do more than Aaron did when “he held his peace.” They can recognise the hand of God, they can bow in reverence and submission, but they cannot do more. Their sentiments are well expressed in these words:—

"I cannot, 'neath thy blow,
My God, thy praises sound :
I can but lie full low,
And cling the cross around.

"I cannot, midst the dust,
Descry thy gracious aim :
I can but own thee just,
Nor once thy dealings blame.

"I cannot pray aright :
Only, though sight be dim,
I see One pray in light,
And mutely look to him.

"I cannot tears restrain :
Only I can reflect,
That, 'neath a kindred pain,
My Saviour's were not checked.

"Submission to thine hand
Is all the height I reach :
I cannot song command,
But praise, by checking speech.

"Like child of sire reproved,
I keep my lowly place,
Till thou, the frown removed,
For duty nerve by grace.

"Thou dost not ask to-day,
My God, the debt I owe :
Thou know'st I cannot pay
Till thou the means bestow."

"When Jesus first prayed in the garden," said Mrs. Schimmelpenninck, "he asked that if possible the cup might pass ; then, strengthened by prayer, he said, 'If this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, Thy will be done!' And he who was before sweating great drops of blood, when the men came to take him, calmly and firmly stepped forward, saying, 'Whom seek ye? I am he.'" Christians need not fear to follow in their Saviour's wake.

“ Tell to thy God thy heart’s desire
 With lips of fire ;
 But close the prayer, as did his own bless’d Son,
 ‘ Yet not my will, but thine, be done.’ ”

“ ‘ All things are possible,’ repeat,
 And thrice entreat ;
 But though the blood start to thy throbbing brow,
 Lowly upon the ground be thou.”

But far higher and more cheerful than mere submission is the sentiment which we have seen Christians are often enabled to cherish when those dear to them have been torn from their embrace. The “joy of grief,” or at least joy in grief, is a common and happy experience. And this joy, as in the case of Mr. Venn, is sometimes “full,” so full as to exclude from the heart every thought that is gloomy or depressing. It flows especially from the assurance that, absent from the body, the departed spirit is present with the Lord. And this assurance may well raise to the highest joy even those who are not naturally given to strong and pleasurable emotion.

“ It is difficult for me to realize the truth,” wrote John Foster to Mr. Sheppard, of Frome, on the decease of Mrs. Sheppard, “ that the person whose *only* image in my mind bears the bloom of youth, and the living expression of intelligence and kindness, is now laid, cold and silent, in the dust. But, indeed, it is not *she* that is laid there ; and if, in your indulgence of pensive thought, you follow her *thither*, but so often in proportion to the frequency of the ascent, as that dead form is less

the essential being of your departed friend than her happy spirit is—what a grand predominance you will have of the bright over the gloomy contemplations! It is true that affection cannot consent to any disparagement of even the dead form of the beloved object; it will hover tenderly over its bed in the dust: well, but let faith be there too; and then even *there* also the contemplation becomes bright on hearing Him that has the keys of death say, ‘I will raise it up at the last day.’

“It is delightful that you can dwell with decided assurance on the piety of your departed associate. You can thus regard her as having passed beyond the very last of the pains and sorrows appointed to her existence by her Creator; as looking back on them *all*, and having entered on an eternity of unmingled joy; as having completed a short education for a higher sphere and a nobler society; as having attained, since she was your companion, and by the act of ceasing to be so, that in comparison with which the whole sublunary world is a trifle; as having left your abode because her presence was required among the blessed and exalted servants of the supreme Lord in heaven.”

What but this assurance, that those we loved are perfected, and are before the throne of their Saviour, *ought* Christians to need to make them rejoice even in the hour of their deep sorrow? Our departed cannot come down, as John Howe reminded Lady Russell on the death of her husband, to have fellowship with us in our sorrows; but we may daily ascend by faith and prayer to have

fellowship with them in their bliss in the presence of their Saviour and their God.

“ I know not, oh, I know not,
 What social joys are there,
 What radiancy of glory,
 What light beyond compare !
 And when I fain would sing them
 My spirit fails and faints,
 And vainly tries to image
 The assembly of the saints.

“ ‘Midst power that knows no limit,
 And wisdom without bound,
 The beatific vision
 Shall gladden saints around :
 There God, my King and portion,
 In fulness of his grace,
 Shall we behold for ever,
 And worship face to face.

“ They stand, those halls of Zion,
 All jubilant with song ;
 And bright with many an angel,
 And many a martyr throng.
 The Prince is ever in them ;
 The light is aye serene :
 The pastures of the blessed
 Are decked in glorious sheen.

“ There is the throne of David ;
 And there, from toil released,
 The shout of them that triumph,
 The song of them that feast :
 And they, beneath their Leader,
 Who conquered in the fight,
 For ever and for ever
 Are clad in robes of white.

“ Jerusalem the glorious,
 The joy of the elect,
 O dear and future vision
 That eager hearts expect !
 E'en now by faith I see thee,
 E'en now thy walls discern,
 To thee my thoughts are kindled,
 And strive, and pant, and yearn.”

CHAPTER XI.

BODILY SUFFERINGS.

CONTENTS.—Pain felt by Christians—Christian endurance—Dr. Morison—Patrick Hamilton—Martyrs of Madagascar—Others besides martyrs—Mrs. Greville Ewing—Visit to the Falls of the Clyde—Fatal accident—Great suffering and great patience—Thomas Jarman—Legal studies—Much suffering—Much work—Much patience—Dr. George Wilson—Feebleness of health—Professional duties—Always feeling death near—Efforts to be useful—Last days—Richard Baxter—Milton's blindness—Felix Neff—Dr. Thomas Bull—Verses from "The Invalid's Hymn Book."

"The mystery of pain—other mysteries of the world around us and within us trouble our spirits, but this our whole nature, body and spirit alike. Other questions we may, more or less, contrive to set aside, but this will not be put by. Whence is pain? Can this be anything else than a witness for sin; an echo in man's body of the sin which is in his soul? Nothing of the kind, there are some who assure us. So far from this, pain, as they would have us to believe, is the fence and guardian of pleasure, a beneficent provision in the economy of nature to warn against the approach or admission of aught that might injure these wonderfully constituted bodies of ours. That it usefully serves, and was intended to serve, such a purpose, none will deny; but oh, how in the bitterness of his spirit must many an agonized sufferer laugh to scorn an explanation so feeble and so false as this is, when offered as the complete explanation of that which rends, and racks, and tortures his whole frame!"—ARCHBISHOP TRENCH.

“ Must I feel sicknesses and smart,
And spend my days and nights in pain ?
Yet, if thy love refresh my heart,
I need not overmuch complain.
This flesh hath drawn my soul to sin :
If it must smart, thy will be done.
Oh, fill me with thy joys within,
And then I'll let it grieve alone !

“ I know my flesh must turn to dust,
My parted soul must come to thee,
And undergo thy judgment just,
And in the endless world must be.
In this there's most of fear and joy,
Because there's most of sin and grace :
Sin will this mortal frame destroy,
But Christ will bring me to thy face.

“ Shall I draw back, and fear the end
Of all my sorrows, tears, and pain,
To which my life and labours tend,
Without which all had been in vain ?
Can I for ever be content
Without true happiness and rest ?
Is earth become so excellent
That I should take it for my best ?

“ Or can I think of finding here
That which my soul so long had sought ?
Should I refuse those joys through fear,
Which bounteous love so dearly bought ?
All that doth taste of heaven is good ;
When heavenly light doth me inform,
When heavenly life stirs in my blood,
When heavenly love my heart doth warm.

“ Though all the reasons I can see
Why I should willingly submit,
And comfortably come to thee,—
My God, thou must accomplish it.
The love which filled up all my days
Will not forsake me, to the end.
This broken body thou wilt raise :
My spirit I to thee commend.”

R. BAXTER.

BODILY SUFFERINGS.

“I do not think the Bible anywhere professes to blame us,” said Dr. George Wilson, “for feeling pain, sickness, poverty, and the like, as distresses. On the other hand, it plainly declares that no affliction for the present is joyous, but grievous. It is a moral, not a physical triumph we are promised over physical ills. Pain is as acute to a devout Christian, poverty as hard to bear, disappointment as painful, so far as they are considered alone, as they can be to the careless or profane. There is no exemption on these points for the Christian.”

This must be kept in view when we speak of “the power of the mind over the body” in Christian experience. Christianity does not make light of the body, as certain systems of philosophy did, which regarded it as the root of all evil, the one cause of all the suffering and misery which the soul, supposed to be imprisoned within it, endures. Nor does Christianity extinguish, or seek, or in any way tend, to extinguish our sensibility to pain. But it presents to the mind such considerations and consolations as enable it to bear pain and bow to the will of God. Hence the record which we can present of the submission and even cheerful endurance

of bodily pain by Christians, is altogether of a different character from that which would be presented by a record of the wonderful things done and borne by ancient Stoics and Spartans, by fakirs and monks, by men under the combined influence of fatalism and fanaticism, and by American Indians trained to look on a tear as a crime. In the annals of Christian experience, we find the most tender sensibilities and the most uncomplaining patience, the most real agony and the truest and divinest joy.

“I would not change places with the Queen on the throne,” said a Christian lady to me on one occasion; and yet her sufferings were so intense at the time that, while standing at the door of her house, I had heard her scream. “My joy is so full,” she said, “that I cannot have more.”

“At this moment,” said Dr. John Morison to me, six weeks before his death, “there is not an inch of my body which is not full of agony.”

But his face was unruffled. His expression was even cheerful. His voice was pitched in a lower key than usual, and his tones were gentle as a child's. He had no raptures to speak of, but there were no clouds to darken his prospects. He spoke like a man who had again and again dug around the foundations of the faith which it had been his life's work to proclaim, and each time were they found deeper and stronger than before. He had likewise examined himself with the most anxious jealousy, and with deep humility; but with unwavering confidence he could look forward to the hour of death. On these themes, and on incidental

topics, he poured out his thoughts in a stream of glowing words, to which the only parallel I can recollect is in the death-bed utterances of Dr. Payson. I listened in reverent and grateful silence, and I felt as if I stood on the confines of heaven, and was listening to one who was already more in heaven than on earth. In the patience and peace and love which I was witnessing, there seemed to be a demonstration of the Divinity of the gospel. And I left the chamber of pain and death, adoring God that he had given such grace to his servant.

For five-and-twenty years Dr. Morison had been a great sufferer although a great worker. "Never did I know a man who so suffered," said the Rev. John Stoughton. "Indeed, much of his work grew out of his sufferings; for, owing to sleepless nights for many years, he devoted to toil the time which we devote to rest. The robustness of his constitution, instead of preserving him from disease and pain, only seemed to render in his case disease the more terrible, and pain the more intense. After visiting him in the sick-room, and after listening to the quiet and even cheerful description he would give of his sufferings, I have gone home with the impression that all the ills to which flesh is heir centred in him."

"His physical sufferings," says another friend, "were such as perhaps rarely fall to the lot of man. Night after night, and this during a long course of years, was he obliged to pace the room in distressing breathlessness, or sit supported in a chair, often in the vain hope of winning an

interval of sleep. But these constantly recurring demands both on his sensibilities (in the loss of his children), and upon his strength, *never* produced in his happy, thankful heart, any murmuring or discontent. No cloud, however dark, ever shadowed the brightness of that joy with which he received all from the hands of a loving Father, and felt safe and happy in this confidence. Unquestionably much of this buoyancy of feeling, which nothing could depress, was traceable to the natural temperament and disposition with which God had so richly endowed him; but they are no less to be acknowledged and honoured as his gift, than the higher graces of Christian submission and holy faith, which were also bestowed upon him abundantly."

The patient and even joyful endurance of bodily pain by the martyrs of the Christian faith is well known. When the protomartyr of the Scottish Reformation, Patrick Hamilton, was surrounded by flames, a voice from the crowd called upon him, if he still had faith in the doctrine for which he was dying, to give a last sign of his constancy; whereupon he raised three fingers of his half-consumed hand, and held them steadily in that position till he ceased to live. While he could speak "he uttered divers comfortable speeches to the bystanders," so great was his faith, so strong his confidence in God. The case of this noble youth is only one of a thousand of which the record is happily preserved for the comfort of the church of God.

Let one instance suffice; and we take it from a land which was visited with the light of the gospel for the first time about 1820, and which within forty years from that period added one hundred names to the noble army of martyrs, and many hundreds to the ranks of those confessors who have suffered the loss of all things for Christ's sake. On one day in 1849, one of the darkest but one of the brightest in the history of Madagascar, nineteen Christians died for Christ. Fifteen of them were hurled over a precipice, and four of them, being nobles, were burned alive. Without one exception they boldly confessed their faith, and yielded their spirits without fear into the hands of their Redeemer. "At the moment when the four nobles were brought to the stake," writes an eye-witness, "a remarkable phenomenon occurred. A rainbow of an immense size, and forming a triple arch, stretched across the heavens. One end of it appeared to the spectators to rest on the post to which the martyrs were tied. The rain in the meanwhile fell in torrents; and the multitudes who were present on the occasion were so struck with amazement and terror at the occurrence, that many of them took to flight." The pile was kindled, and then, from amidst the crackling and roaring of the fire, were heard, not the sounds of pain, but the song of praise. That scene, and the hymn which these martyrs sung as they rose in their fiery chariot to heaven, will never be forgotten in Madagascar. But prayer followed praise. "O Lord," they were heard to cry, "receive our spirits; for thy love to us

has caused this to come to us: and lay not this sin to their charge." Thus writes a witness of that wonderful and memorable scene: "They prayed as long as they had any life. Then they died; but softly, gently. Indeed gently was the going forth of their life, and astonished were all the people around that beheld the burning of them there."

The Rev. William Ellis and the Bishop of Mauritius visited the scene of this martyrdom together in 1862, and one of them writes, "Our companions, most of whom had been spectators on that eventful day, and one the brother of a martyr, pointed out where the soldiers and the heathen stood around and cried, 'Where is Jehovah now? Why does he not come and take you away?' To which, from the midst of the flames, the martyrs answered, 'Jehovah is here: he is taking us to a better place.' Our companions also showed us the part of the road, a little distant, on which the relatives and associates of the Christians stood, waving their last adieus to their rejoicing friends, who smiled, and lifted up, as far as they could, their scorched or burning fragments of dress, to return the salutation. In perfect accordance with this account is the spirit and feeling manifested by survivors when recounting their sufferings. I have sometimes sat as if enchained to the lips of the venerable widow or sister of a martyr, as she has recounted with simple pathos the suffering she has endured; and have been overcome with wonder and admiration at the marvellous power of 'the love of Christ shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto them.'"

But others than martyrs have been called to endure great bodily suffering, and their experience will be found probably more reassuring to ordinary sufferers than that of those who have been called to lay down their life for Christ's sake.

We have a beautiful example of Christian patience and fortitude in the endurance of severe bodily pain in Mrs. Greville Ewing, of Glasgow. On Wednesday, the 10th of September, 1828, this excellent lady and her husband and several relations left their home in Glasgow to visit the Falls of Clyde. When the coach which was to convey them was at the door, she went into her husband's study and said, "Let us commit ourselves to God." Standing together, hand in hand, they spent a few minutes in prayer, committing themselves, each other, and their fellow-travellers, to God, for time and eternity, and particularly for the excursion on which they were setting out. "Alas," says Mr. Ewing, in his wife's memoir, "the excursion proved fatal! What then? were our prayers unavailing? I cannot allow it. Whoever prays daily must one day receive, in the providence of God, a similar answer. Death met us; but God did not forsake us. He stood by the sufferer till the last moment, when he took her to himself. Would she not, does she not, join me in saying, nothing happened to prevent us from adhering to the apostle's testimony, 'I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day'?"

The weather on this memorable and fatal day

was favourable for enjoying the romantic scenery through which the travellers passed, and the journey of forty miles was performed in safety till within three minutes' ride of the spot where they should finally quit the carriage to view the falls. They had looked with impunity over much steeper banks than that on which death met them; but on descending a slope towards the gate at which they were to alight, the coach was upset, and rolled down a precipitous bank some way, till its further descent was prevented by trees. All the travellers were injured, but Mrs. Ewing worst of all. When her husband reached her, he found her sitting on the bank with her right leg broken close by the ankle, the leg-bone protruding far through the skin, the flesh lacerated, and the blood streaming. But she was sitting in silence, with perfect composure; and to her husband's exclamation of agony she calmly replied, "Yes; I cannot help it: the will of God be done."

From all quarters friendly help soon began to reach the sufferers; and they were all finally conveyed to an unoccupied house, where beds were provided for them with as little delay as possible. By the time that Mrs. Ewing was laid on the bed from which she never rose, there were four or five medical gentlemen present, and further medical assistance was procured from Glasgow as soon as possible. The bone was soon set and the foot restored to its proper place and position; but the agony was so intense that, with all her efforts to suppress her feelings, she could not but cry out. When Saturday arrived, it became evident that there

was the most imminent danger of a fatal result. Although very much exhausted, she passed the day with much tranquillity. "At one time, when we were alone," says Mr. Ewing, "she said to me, 'Repeat some passages of Scripture.' I began with, 'When my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the Rock that is higher than I.'* In a little while she said, 'Give me some passages from the Romans.' I repeated, 'For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.'† 'Repeat rather,' she said, 'from the third chapter, the way of a sinner's justification before God.' I read, from verse 19th to 26th inclusive, 'Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this

* Psa. lxi. 2.

† Rom. viii. 18.

time his righteousness : that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.' What I understood by her recurring to this portion of Scripture was, that her comfort in trouble rose, not from the recollection of former faith, and piety, and usefulness, but solely from the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Divinely appointed, accepted, and revealed ground of a sinner's hope in drawing near to God, given to all them that believe (for there is no difference), and equally worthy of God and suited to our need from first to last. She was now satisfied; and I did not attempt to fatigue her attention any further at the time."

Saturday night was Mrs. Ewing's last on earth, and her worst. But she was not absorbed in her own sufferings : she was composed and resigned, and most tenderly mindful of all who were with her. In the morning, she said to one of the medical men, " Doctor, am I not in a very critical state?" " It would be wrong to flatter you," was the reply: " we have no hope." Till now she had not expressed, nor seemed to entertain, any apprehensions of a fatal result. With a severe and tedious illness she had laid her account, but not with death. The announcement now made to her was as unexpected as it was solemn. " She evidently felt its solemnity, but showed no symptoms of alarm, confusion, or reluctance. Her immediate effort was to improve the short time that might remain for the benefit of others. With this view she assembled all the family that could come round her bed, that she might express her dying faith and hope; her love to Christ, and to his people,

and to his cause, through all the world; her desire for the salvation of her relatives and friends, whether present or absent; and her sympathy with those whom she was about to leave in a state of bereavement and solitude. She also remarked, with wonderful accuracy and composure, the symptoms of approaching death; and while she spoke chiefly of the things of God and the concerns of the soul, she settled some worldly matters, and expressed her wishes as to her burial.

“What a mercy it is,” said the dying lady, “that salvation is the work of Christ, that he hath finished it, and that we are called not to attempt that work for ourselves, but to believe in him. I have no elevations, but I look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” To one of her fellow-sufferers she said, “You cannot, nor can any one, conceive how precious Christ is to me at this moment.” And to another—her cousin, Taylor Cathcart, Esq.—who was disposed to blame himself as the occasion of the fatal excursion, and who was confined to bed with his own wounds, she sent an affectionate message: “Tell dear Taylor that a sparrow falleth not without our Heavenly Father, and that the very hairs of our head are all numbered.” To two of her servants who had been sent for to assist in giving attendance, she said, “My faithful girls, I thank you for all the love you have shown me, and all the care you have taken of me; I rejoice in what I have seen of the grace of God in you, and I hope you will be enabled to persevere, especially in your zealous endeavours to bring others

to Christ." She gave thanks to God, as she had done immediately after the accident, that in the overturn of the carriage the mortal injury had happened to her and not to her husband.

After many words addressed to the weeping bystanders, she said, "Commit my soul to God." This her husband did in a few petitions. And when he prayed that the Lord might not leave her in the valley and shadow of death, her response was, "I am not alone, for God is with me." She was conscious when her pulse ceased to beat. And on her husband putting his finger on her wrist, she said, "You need not do that. I told you the pulsation had left my wrists; and now is leaving my heart." It was a satisfaction to her that she had an opportunity of saying all that she wished to say. Within a few moments of death she said to her husband, "I can still see your kind sympathizing look." She closed her own eyes, reclined her head on the friend who supported her, the respiration became gradually slower; there was not a distorted feature, nor an agitated limb; two or three breathings more and all was over. Grace had triumphed over bodily pain and anguish and over death itself.

But a life-long endurance of bodily suffering is a greater trial of faith and patience than the intensest agony when it is sudden and brief. And of such life-long suffering we have many examples—examples full of work performed under suffering, of the serenest resignation to the will of God, and of a cheerful and hopeful piety in both pain and toil.

Of Thomas Jarman, Esq., an eminent lawyer, and the author of works often quoted in our courts of law almost with the authority of law itself, and happily at the same time an eminent Christian, we are told that it is scarcely possible to form a just idea of the degree of suffering he was almost daily called to endure. Close application to study, many years before, cost him the use of a limb, and rendered him thenceforward dependent on the support of crutches in walking. At a still earlier period, he was deprived of sight for more than two years, and throughout his subsequent career he found a low temperature essential to the command of distinct vision. Unwilling to trust important legal documents to any eyes but his own, and unable to see for himself without the invigorating breath of the external atmosphere, he was under the necessity of sitting in the open air for many hours in the day, even in winter, and often with the ink ready to freeze in his pen. Having to endure, in addition to such hardships, a continual feeling of debility, dyspepsia, and frequent attacks of illness sometimes threatening his life, his indefatigable perseverance in labour was marvellous, and even more so the results he achieved. But another thing there was, more marvellous still—the unbroken serenity of his soul amidst it all. No word of complaint ever escaped his lips. He was never seen otherwise than cheerful, not only as submissive to the appointments of Heaven, but also as breathing the spirit of contentment and thankfulness.

The noble and Christian manner in which he com-

ported himself under the severe trial of blindness which came upon him in early life, may be gathered from his own works. Speaking of the work which was the foundation of his legal fame, he says, "I laboured at this work hard and long. Indeed, the mass of new matter I collected, and most carefully analyzed, promised to make my edition of the book substantially a new work. Just as all my cases had thus been laboriously got together, and when the process of arranging and classifying them after a regular order was all that remained to complete the work, suddenly my eyesight, which for some time past had occasioned me much anxiety, wholly failed me, and I had to lay all work aside for two or three years, during which period I was interdicted reading of any and every kind. You may judge how great a trial this was to me at such a time and in such circumstances. However, in the end it really did me good service, and in this simple way. When I found my eyesight returning, I began cautiously, most cautiously, to resume my work. There was a whole barrel full of manuscripts, which I had already prepared and finished, as I had then thought. These I now carefully read over afresh and revised page by page. In fact, I began the work again with all the advantages of these three idle years of solitary musing upon its contents; and thus it came to pass, that when the book was fairly in the hands of the printer, it was a much better book, and achieved for the unknown editor a much worthier reputa-

tion, than otherwise could possibly have been the case.”

The source of this good man's strength to labour and suffer is no secret. We are told by Professor Charlton, of Plymouth, that he spent hours, especially on the Lord's day, in private communion with God. On one occasion, a friend having referred to the “Heavenly Contemplations,” in Baxter's “Saint's Rest,” as truly sublime in thought and language, Mr. Jarman replied, “I quite agree with you, and some years ago I knew those contemplations by heart. The ‘Saint's Rest’ was generally the companion of my journeys to town; and when business did not particularly press, I read those portions of it to which you refer so frequently, that at length I could repeat them almost word for word, without the aid of the book.” Let the reader dwell for a moment on the picture these simple words must suggest to him. A great lawyer taking Baxter's “Saint's Rest” as “the companion of his journeys” to and from his chambers, and, “when business did not particularly press,” refreshing his mind with the “Heavenly Contemplations”!

Mr. Jarman worked on year after year under a weight of bodily disease and infirmity which would have crushed many. Yet, amidst all his toils and sufferings, he found time to take a deep and practical interest in the diffusion of Divine truth and the salvation of the world. While he could endure his own daily sufferings without a murmur, every sufferer known to him had his ready, and, to the extent

of his power, his effectual sympathy. The orphan and the widow found a faithful friend; copies of the Scriptures and religious tracts were largely put in circulation, and every kind of evangelizing agency was encouraged and sustained. Even in his vacation journeyings, when the recovery of his own shattered health might well have absorbed his whole attention and thought, stores of tracts and religious books regularly accompanied him, and no opportunity was lost for sowing, by these and other means, the seed of the kingdom. He was at all times particularly alive to any indications of thoughtfulness in his pupils; and when he felt himself unable to speak on religious subjects, he often sought to accomplish the same object by presenting a suitable book.

When, in 1855, Mr. Jarman appeared to be dying, nothing could exceed the steadfast assurance of his faith and hope. A friend having observed to him, "Should you be taken from us, all is bright beyond the dark valley," the exhausted sufferer immediately awoke from what was apparently the sleep of death, and raising himself for a moment or two in bed, he looked calmly and joyfully at the speaker, and then with profound humility, yet intense earnestness and adoring gratitude, added, "Yes, my friend, all is bright as regards the world to come. There's not a fear, there's not a cloud, there's not a shadow upon the prospect. Christ is my Hope, my Rock, my Light, my Salvation, and my soul is safe in him." And when, in 1860, the last enemy really assailed him, the silence imposed by the peculiar nature of his disease was occasionally broken by the utter-

ance of passages of Scripture expressive of his unabated confidence: "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God had prepared for them that love him." "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth." "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word."

We have narrated the circumstances in which George Wilson was brought to God. His after life was one of great feebleness, though of singular activity and enjoyment. Pain and weariness were his frequent companions. When recovering from the amputation of his foot, "particularly weary," he says, "was the first waking in the dull, grey morning. Despair seemed ready to overwhelm me. It was then I fully realized the unspeakable preciousness of prayer, and that not to an overwhelming mysterious agency, such as electricity or gravitation, but to an agent or person, and he not separated from me by all that intervenes between God and man, but possessing, as I possess, a human nature, though (unlike mine) his nature is sinless, and is unspeakably glorious."

Removing soon after to a dwelling which possessed the advantage of having lecture-room and laboratory under its roof, he was able to attend to his professional duties even when prevented from going out of doors. And to go from his bed to

his lecture-room was no uncommon thing for him in the years that followed. Nearly twelve months after he lost his foot, we find him writing, "I had got so far on in the way of limping about with a stick, that I was promising myself a visit to church, and the pleasure of hearing a sermon, when my hopes were disappointed by a fall down stairs, which sprained my knee, and doomed me to bed and sofa for a fortnight, and to another leaf out of the book of physical affliction in which I have lately had to read so many lessons. I have read somewhere, that in the lives of men, if wisely watched, may be discerned the finger of Providence, teaching each by a kind of lesson peculiar to himself; so that on one, bodily affliction, on another, mental sorrow, on another, peculiar distress falls; the same kind of trial returning again and again, while the sufferer is exempt from other forms of woe. I have sometimes thought there was a little truth in it, and you can suppose in what way I apply it to myself. But in reality every sorrow bears others in its bosom, and trial in one shape must always be more or less trial in all. This is a foolish speculation, and one I do not seek to indulge in. So long as I feel every lesson less than sufficient to teach me the patience and faith I so much require, I feel every disposition to look with a cold eye of curiosity on God's dealings with me at once silenced. I know now enough of 'the peace that passeth all understanding,' to welcome the attainment of more of it at any price its great Giver may afford it to me."

"If we could learn contentment," we find him

saying about the same time, "we should find it a greater acquisition than happiness or beauty or wisdom or wealth." "In the ten years that follow," says his biographer, a loving sister, "we find the most important part of George Wilson's life, so far as literary work is concerned. The amount done seems more befitting one strong in body than the invalid on whose behalf our sympathies have been excited. But one secret of his unresting diligence lay in the belief that his life would be a short one. 'Don't be surprised,' he said to a friend, in 1845, 'if any morning at breakfast you hear I am gone.' So, with the shadow of death close at hand, he ever worked as one whose days were numbered. At first, this seems a gloomy thought, but that to him it was far otherwise we cannot doubt. 'To none,' he says, 'is life so sweet as to those who have lost all fear to die.' They who have large stores of health and strength are apt to lavish them thoughtlessly on various objects, but such as he, husbanding their strength for work alone, are frequently able to realize what their stronger brethren only dream of."

From this period to its close, his life was one long sacrifice of pleasure to duty. While lecturing ten, eleven, or more hours weekly, sometimes with pulse at 150 degrees, frequently with torturing setons and open blisters on the chest, every holiday was eagerly seized for the application of similar "heroic remedies," or "bosom friends," as he named them. His keen appreciation of the pleasures of society and of beautiful things, was sternly put

aside to meet professional claims ; and all with such quiet simplicity or gay good humour, that few if any guessed the price at which his work was accomplished. In fact, he was what he himself described a departed friend to be, "a daily lesson of courage, hope, and faith."

Though all his work, his commonest work, was done for Christ, George Wilson longed for opportunities of imparting direct benefit to the souls of men. And these he found by employing the quiet hours of the Sabbath in writing letters of instruction and consolation to invalids. In 1847, we find him saying, "One of my pupils of a former year, a remarkably acute, hard-headed, and self-reliant lad, has recently passed into the last stage of a hopeless disease. Knowing that his family, though in intellectualities much above the average, in so far as religious knowledge is concerned, were little likely to make known to the lad how soon he must go to meet God, I cast about for some means of getting at my old pupil. His father was in town and promised to call on me, but was prevented. I intended, had he done so, to have asked his permission to write to his son, but it was a formidable business to do so by a formal letter. Behold, however, the mercy of God, and his answer to the prayer of a servant who had been asking him for work! Whilst I was resolving and hesitating to write, a letter came from the lad himself asking me to write to him occasionally, as it would be a kindness. I replied at once, and found him glad to have the ice broken in reference to his spiritual state. An exacerbation

of his illness has turned all his thoughts towards another world, and now he sadly beseeches me to write as often as I can." And, in the same year, we find him saying, "A young lady of fourteen, dying of consumption, has asked me to write to her, and I have been trying to tell her how the grave may be robbed of victory, and death of his sting. She is in the country, and has got to expect a letter every week. I don't like to disappoint her, for she is a singularly amiable, gentle person, to whom heaven, I believe, has already held out a welcome."

With the same end in view, the accomplishing of direct spiritual good, he took part in services connected with the Edinburgh Medical Missionary Society, and in a lecture on the "Sacredness of Medicine as a Profession," we find him saying, "I adjure you to remember that the head of our profession is Christ. He left all men an example that they should follow in his steps, but he left it specially to us. It is well that the statues of Hippocrates and Esculapius should stand outside our College of Physicians, but the living image of our Saviour should be enshrined in our hearts. . . . He is not ashamed to call us brethren. May none of us be ashamed to call him Lord! May we all confess him before men, that he may confess us before the angels in heaven!"

George Wilson had been running a race with death, he said himself, ever since he reached his majority. There was what he called a sleeping volcano in his lungs which was often roused from its

slumbers, and kept him almost constantly on the borders of the grave, and he knew how the race and the battle must terminate. "There is this difference," he said, "between contending with moral and physical disease, that every victory over the former makes you stronger for the next fight, but beaten or victorious in your battles with illness, you come off permanently weakened."

The end came in 1858. At the close of May, in that year, in writing to his friend Dr. Cairns, he alludes to the physical languor felt throughout the previous winter, and adds, "I cannot say that morally I have spent an unhappy or an unprofitable winter. The powers of the world to come draw nearer to me than ever, and stand in a more benignant relation.

"I have become wondrously indifferent to the praise of men, but increasingly anxious to do my daily work, which is far from unpleasant, honestly, heartily, and earnestly. I would count it no healthy token if I shrank from daily work. Far otherwise, I wish I were ten times stronger and healthier than I am, to do ten times more work in the great Taskmaster's eye. But, in spite of many disheartening and even distressing things, and cares, and fears, and sins, I have tasted so largely of the mercies of God; the all-attractiveness of the blessed Saviour's character, and the perfection of his example, have risen more recently into such prominence before me; and the sense of a higher presence, enabling me to enter into communion with God, and to pray acceptably unto him, has so filled my heart, that the things of this life arrange themselves according to a new per-

spective, and seem much smaller and farther off than they did before."

"In body and soul," he wrote soon after, "I am at peace with God and man, thanks to him who giveth us the victory over all our enemies. That wondrous 15th chapter of 1st Corinthians! it stirs me like a trump of doom. I cannot read it aloud without finding my voice break down; all the immortal dead I know seem to gather about me as its mingled pathos, and jubilation, and summons sound out from its solemn diapason. Tears and confession and thanksgiving take the place of articulate didactic words, and the image of the heavenly obliterates all else."

In the beginning of November following, he resumed his duties as Professor of Technology in the University of Edinburgh, with an energy and freshness which surprised those who knew the state of his health, the hæmorrhage from his lungs having greatly increased during the two preceding months. Life was very precious to him, but the precariousness of his own tenure of it did not depress him. "It is a becoming act of Christian thanksgiving," he wrote to a lady on her birthday, "to acknowledge God's kindness in granting us so great a gift as life." Not the less did he feel this thankfulness though he never looked forward to a long life; but sought, from the time of entrance on his public career, to "live as a dying man; the best preparation for a happy life; the best preparation for a peaceful death." "I spin my thread of life from week to week, rather than from year to year." About six months previously, when

visiting a friend, he said solemnly on parting: "Janet, I am trying to live every day so that I may be ready to quit on an hour's notice." More strongly were his desires apparent in the few words he addressed to another: "I am resigned to live." Such readiness for both worlds is difficult to realize. "This life seemed to him so full of exhaustless springs of delight, that the only way of reaching in thought his elevation, is by entering into the spirit of his favourite words: 'To be with Christ is far better!'"

Within a few days of his beginning his winter's work at college, Dr. Wilson was taken away from the toils and pains of this mortal state. In 1848, he had written to a friend, "I have been reading lately, with great sadness, the 'Memorials of Charles Lamb,' and the 'Life of Keats.' There is something in the noble brotherly love of Charles to brighten, and hallow, and relieve the former; but Keats's death-bed is the blackness of midnight, unmitigated by one ray of light. God keep you and me from such a death-bed! We may have physical agonies as great to endure. It is the common lot. I feel that our Heavenly Father can better choose for us than we can for ourselves of what we should die; but I pray our blessed Lord and Master to be with us in our last fight with the last enemy, and to give us the victory. If he does, what shall pain be but like other bitter medicines, the preparative for the unbroken health of an endless life?" In 1857, he said, "Often and often, as I have asked myself of what should I die, I have felt that, had I the choice offered me among physical deaths, I

should not know how to choose, and would leave to God the appointment of the mode of dying, beseeching only to be spared maddening agony, and to be kept, above all, from losing faith in the blessed Saviour."

These desires were granted to him. There was no "maddening agony" in his last hours. "I am in the hands of a good and kind Redeemer," he said; "I rejoice in that every way." And when his sister said, "You're going home," he replied, "I've been an unworthy servant of a worthy and gracious Master." When he breathed his last, those who witnessed his death could kneel around his bed and offer thanksgiving that for him the Saviour's prayer was answered, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am."

In Richard Baxter we have another example of life-long suffering combined with uncomplaining submission, and an amount of work which few men in the possession of perpetual health could perform. "He was hardly grown up when his health began to droop, and, for two years, he was thought to be dying of consumption. And although he did not die of consumption, he was doomed never to know a day of health again. His body was often racked with excruciating pain, but his usual complaints were those dull and dreary ailments which sap the strength and exhaust the spirits. Defying the skill of six-and-thirty doctors, and reducing his attenuated frame to little better than a museum of morbid

anatomy, the first wonder is, that amidst the premature old age which they induced, he survived for half a century; and another and a greater wonder is, that the strong and ardent spirit was daily a conqueror over this daily dying. Losing much time in the requirements of a careful *regimen*, and on no one morning of a lengthened life waking up to the sensation of perfect soundness, so intent was he on his beloved studies, that no Englishman of that century has left behind him such memorials of industry; and, as far as concerns the practical efficacy of his ministrations, there can be no doubt that much of their urgency and beseeching importunity was owing to the abiding recollection, "The Lord is at hand." As he has told us in his metrical autobiography:—

" The frequent sight of death's most awful face
 Rebuked my sloth, and bid me mend my pace.
 This called me out to work while it was day,
 And warn poor souls to turn without delay;
 Resolving speedily thy word to preach,
 With Ambrose I at once did learn and teach;
 Still thinking I had little time to live,
 My fervent heart to win men's souls did strive;
 I preached as never sure to preach again,
 And as a dying man to dying men!"

"I do not regard my lot either with weariness or compunction," said the poet of "Paradise Lost," referring to the loss of his sight. "I continue in the same sentiment fixed and immovable: I do not think my God displeased with me, neither is he displeased. On the contrary, I experience, and thankfully acknowledge, his paternal clemency and benignity towards me in everything that is of the greatest moment; specially in this, that, he himself

consoling and encouraging my spirits, I acquiesce without a murmur in his sacred dispensations. It is through his grace that I find my friends, even more than before, kind and affectionate towards me; that they are my consolers, honourers, visitors, assistants. . . . Nor is it an occasion of anguish to me, though you count it miserable, that I am fallen in vulgar estimation into the class of the blind, the unfortunate, the wretched, and the helpless; since my hope is, that I am thus brought nearer to the mercy and protection of the universal Father. There is a path, as the apostle teaches me, through weakness to a more consummate strength. Let me, therefore, be helpless, so that, in my debility, the better and immortal vigour of our human nature may be more effectually displayed; so that, amidst my darkness, the light of the Divine countenance may shine forth more bright; then shall I be at once helpless, and yet of giant strength; blind, yet of vision most penetrating. Thus may I be in this helplessness carried on to fulness of joy, and in this darkness surrounded with the light of eternal day."

Felix Neff was greatly honoured of God in turning many natives of the Alps from darkness to light; but his physical strength was exhausted by his toils, and by the severity of the climate in districts which, during the winter season, scarcely see the light of the sun. No constitution could long endure such exertions as his, with such variations of temperature, alternating between crowded hovels, where respiration could scarcely be supported, and the

mountain-top, across which the most cutting winds of winter were often blowing. The pains he suffered were only relieved by abstinence, while his fatiguing journeys required a more generous fare. In a letter written in Geneva, after he was compelled to relinquish work, he describes himself as "suffering little, sleeping little; being almost unable to eat, drink, write, walk, or even reflect for a long time together; in short, being incapable of enduring the least fatigue." "It was most heart-rending," said one of his friends, "to behold him thus pale and emaciated; his large eyes beaming with an expression of fortitude and pain; covered from head to foot with four or five woollen garments; submitting in silence and with the greatest calmness to a painful operation, which was constantly repeated; suffering hunger; counting the hours; and at last venturing to take something; then waiting with anxiety till the food, such as it was, should digest; and thus passing all his days and nights during a long succession of relapses and of physical prostration."

During all this time, his thoughts were continually among the scenes of his past exertions. "My mind wanders," said he, "as in a dream, over the high Alps and the Trieve. My heart accompanies it in its progress, and finds itself, not without emotion, in all those places where it experienced so many delightful sensations, especially where it has beat for the conversion of poor sinners, and where I have been in the society of precious souls eager for the word of salvation." "As to myself," he says in another letter, "I have every reason to believe that

my task is finished. I wait until, by means of trials and afflictions, the Lord shall accomplish within me that work of patience which must be perfected; and may he then take me, how and when he pleases, to his eternal rest."

Deeply concerned for the advancement of the holy cause for which he had sacrificed his health, and for an aged mother who watched over him in his last hours, his only concern for himself was to be made meet for God. His last letter was written by his own dying hand to his distant friends, and concluded in these triumphant words: "Adieu; adieu. I ascend to our Father in perfect, perfect peace. Victory, victory, victory, by Jesus Christ!—Felix Neff." His last night was agony. He was often convulsed, sometimes nearly suffocated, at times almost insensible. But there was no murmuring; and once, when a friend expressed his sorrow at his sufferings, he turned his eyes on him with a look of inexpressible affection. Next morning was his last, and his expectation was doubtless realized, "I shall soon, very soon, be with my God."

"Since I wrote last," said Dr. Payson to a friend, "I have been called to sing of mercy and judgment. My old friend the sick headache has favoured me with an unusual share of his company, and has seemed particularly fond of visiting me on the Sabbath. Then came cholera morbus, and, in a few hours, reduced me so low that I could have died as easily as not. Rheumatism next arrived, eager to pay his respects, and embraced my right shoulder with such

ardour of affection, that he had well-nigh torn it from its socket." But after some further playful description of his many ailments, Dr. Payson could say, "God has mercifully stayed his rough wind in the day of his east wind. No horrible, hell-born temptations, no rheumatism of the mind, have been allowed to visit me in my sufferings; but such consolations, such heavenly visits, as turned agony into pleasure, and constrained me to sing aloud whenever I could catch my breath long enough to utter a stanza. Indeed, I have been ready to doubt whether pain be really an evil; for, though more pain was crowded into last week than any other week of my life, yet it was one of the happiest weeks I ever spent; and now I am ready to say, Come what will come,—sickness, pain, agony, poverty, loss of friends, only let God come with them, and they shall be welcome. Praised, blessed for ever, be his name, for all my trials and afflictions."

One example more of Christian patience, not Stoicism, under severe bodily affliction. Dr. Thomas Bull, the grandson of the intimate friend of John Newton and William Cowper, after years of great activity as a London physician, endured nearly nine years of blindness and partial paralysis. His mind had long been overtaken, and incurable disease was the consequence. After the first shock of helplessness, his mind rose above his condition. Its past efforts and pleasant furniture, we are told, refreshed and stimulated it. "For by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all pleasant and precious riches."

These days of darkness and almost complete helplessness were comparatively happy and useful. He often said "they were very happy," and the example of uncomplaining endurance and bright submission could not have been witnessed in vain. The last fifteen weeks of his life were passed in terrible pain and weakness. Abscesses formed on the spine, and the attacks of pain were very severe. At such times, he would say, "Read me one of the promises of God;" this, and this only, enabled him to bear his intense agony. He said that when the continuance of pain or its increase would have been more than mortal strength could endure, he prayed to God, and at the right moment relief came.

On the rapid increase of disease, he said, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good. I can be quiet in his arms." At last, perfect darkness came on, and in this state of entire blindness he continued till his death. But the supports of the gospel never failed him, and the hopes of the gospel cheered him. A favourite text of his was, "There shall be no night there." What a change, when the vision of the Lamb and the white-robed multitude of the redeemed burst upon his sight!

These examples are sufficient to show us that the consolations of the gospel are equal to every emergency, and to every variety of human woe. We may have our "thorn in the flesh" as hard to bear as was Paul's, but we have Paul's Lord to say to us, "My grace is sufficient for thee." And then we shall be able to say in reply, "most

gladly will I therefore glory in infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

"Oh, cheer thee, cheer thee, suffering saint!
Though worn with chast'ning, be not faint;
And though thy night of pain seem long,
Cling to the Lord, in him be strong.
He marks, he numbers every tear:
Not one faint sigh escapes his ear.

"Yes, cheer thee, cheer thee! though thine ear,
Quickened by suffering, scarce can bear
The voice of those who love thee best,
Not lonely art thou, not unblest'd:
Thy soul's Beloved, ever nigh,
Bends o'er thee, whispering, 'It is I.'

"Oh, cheer thee, cheer thee! now's the hour,
To him to lift thine eye for power,
His all-sufficiency to show
E'en in extremity of woe:
While in the furnace to lie still,
This is indeed to do his will.

"Then cheer thee, cheer thee! though the flame
Consume thy wasting, suffering frame,
His gold shall suffer harm nor loss;
He will but purge away the dross,
And fit it, graced with many a gem,
To form his glorious diadem.

"And *he will* cheer thee! he will calm
Thy pain intense with heavenly balm
Show thee the martyr's white-robed throng,
Thy place prepared that host among:
That weight of glory will o'erpower
The anguish of life's suffering hour."

CHAPTER XII.

OLD AGE :

ITS SORROWS AND CONSOLATIONS.

CONTENTS.—Old age mournful—Solomon's description of it—But may be beautiful and happy—The palm-tree—First requisite to a happy old age—The second—The third—Göethe in his old age—Aged Christians—Dr. Chalmers—Paul the aged—Peter the aged—John the aged—Mrs. Schimmelpenninck—Life reviewed—The future life anticipated—Privileges of all—Verses by Carey.

“Life bears us on like the stream of a mighty river. Our boat, at first, glides gently down the narrow channel, through the playful murmurings of the little brook, and the windings of its grassy border. The trees shed their blossoms over our young heads; the flowers on the brink seem to offer themselves to our young hands; we are happy in hope, and we grasp eagerly at the beauties around us; but the stream hurries us on, and still our hands are empty. Our course in youth and manhood is along a wider and deeper flood, and amid objects more striking and magnificent. We are animated by the moving picture of enjoyment and industry which passes before us; we are excited by some short-lived success, or depressed and rendered miserable by some equally short-lived disappointment. But our energy and our depression are both in vain. The stream bears us on, and our joys and our griefs alike are left behind us. We may be shipwrecked, but we cannot anchor: our voyage may be hastened, but it cannot be delayed: whether rough or smooth, the river hastens towards its home, till the roaring of the ocean is in our ears, and the tossing of its waves is beneath our keel, and the lands lessen from our eyes, and the floods are lifted up around us, and the earth loses sight of us, and we take our last leave of earth and its inhabitants; and of our further voyage there is no witness but the Infinite and the Eternal.”—BISHOP HEBER.

" I see an aged man
Climbing the hill's steep side ;
Long has he trod the pilgrim's way,
And now the sun's declining ray
Homeward his steps will guide :
A seat of rest,
Among the blest
E'en now awaits in heaven the dear expected guest.

" His path is rough and steep,
More toilsome near its close :
The sky looks dark ; the winds blow keen ;
The shadows lengthen o'er the scene,
And scarce a floweret blows :
The pilgrim's eye,
Still fixed on high,
Sees brighter worlds appear beyond the darkening sky.

" Pilgrim, the end is near !
Though faint, yet still pursue ;
When thou shalt gain the mountain's brow,
A scene beyond conception now
Shall burst upon thy view :
Celestial air
Shall fan thee there,
And thou shalt bid adieu to toil and pain and care."

OLD AGE:

ITS SORROWS AND CONSOLATIONS.

VERY mournful are some of the Bible descriptions of old age. "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." This is no picture of fancy. Nor is that which Solomon gives us by way of enforcing the exhortation, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth," when he says, "While the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; while the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain:"—

" In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble,
And the strong men shall bow themselves,
And the grinders cease because they are few,
And those that look out of the windows be darkened,
And the doors shall be shut in the streets,
When the sound of the grinding is low,
And he shall rise up at the voice of the bird,
And all the daughters of music shall be brought low ;
Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high,
And fears shall be in the way,
And the almond-tree shall flourish,
And the grasshopper shall be a burden,
And desire shall fail : because man goeth to his long home,
And the mourners go about the streets :

Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken,
 Or the pitcher be broken at the fountain,
 Or the wheel broken at the cistern.
 Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was :
 And the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

Such is old age, and such its invariable ending. And so far as its physical aspects are concerned, as it is with the wicked, so it is with the righteous.

But the picture has another side. "The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness." * "The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; to shew that the Lord is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him." † Even to us in western lands, who, though we have seen palm-trees and cedars, are not familiar with them, this description is very striking and suggestive. The ideas of majesty, and beauty, and fruitfulness, and honour, all connect themselves with the cedar and the palm-tree. "The palm," we are told, "grows slowly but steadily from century to century, uninfluenced by those alternations of the seasons which affect other trees. It does not rejoice overmuch in winter's copious rain, nor does it droop under the drought and the burning sun of summer. Neither heavy weights which men place upon its head, nor the importunate urgency of the wind, can sway it aside from perfect uprightness. There it stands, looking calmly down upon the world below,

* Prov. xvi. 31.

† Psalm xcii. 12, 15.

and patiently yielding its large clusters of golden fruit from generation to generation. They bring forth fruit in old age." When the psalmist says, "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God," he alludes probably to the custom of planting beautiful and long-lived trees in the courts of temples and palaces, and in all "high places" for worship, a custom still common in the east. Nearly every palace and mosque and convent in Syria has such trees in its courts, and, being well protected, they flourish exceedingly. Solomon covered all the walls of the Holy of holies with carvings of palm-trees. They were thus represented in the very house of the Lord; and their presence there was not only ornamental but appropriate and highly suggestive; the very best emblem, not only of patience in well doing, but of the rewards of the righteous—a fat and flourishing old age, a peaceful end, a glorious immortality.

Old age, with all its physical infirmities and drawbacks, may then be very beautiful, very useful, and very happy.

But in order to this, the one grand essential prerequisite is that the old man should have faith in God and in his Christ. I say "in his Christ," because a mere general faith in the being and government of God is not sufficient. "How dreary would old age and illness be without the great doctrine of the Atonement!" said John Foster, when himself old and ill. He spoke as a Christian, and with reference to his Christian life. The omissions

and shortcomings of the best life presented themselves to his mind. "One feels," he said, "that, in the great concern of religion, much more might have been done." And it was this thought that made him revert to the great doctrine of the Atonement. Conscious that while he had "lived to God," he had lived so imperfectly, had come so far short of what he ought to be and what he ought to have done, whither should he look for peace but to that atonement through which sin is forgiven and the sinner reconciled to God? And if the Christian's condition would be dreary without free and daily access to Christ for daily cleansing and pardon, how unutterably dark must be the condition of the man who, old and feeble, has never come to Christ, and does not now come to him, but bears on his soul the load of the accumulated sins of many years. If he only thinks, let him look behind or before, and he will find nothing but darkness: behind, the darkness of a life without God; before, the darkness of an eternity without God. The darkness is such as may be felt, and the wonder is that it does not appal and overwhelm his spirit.

There is a second thing needful in order to make the old age of man, like the old age of the palm-tree, fat and flourishing; it is that the old man should call into constant exercise all the principles which belong to him as a Christian, and which form his dearest heritage, that of which neither worldly adversity nor decay of nature can rob him. He is a child of God. Let him think of this. Once far from God, now made nigh; once an enemy, now a

friend ; once an outcast from his Father's house, now restored and pardoned : let him think of this. The relation in which he stands to God is one so full of blessing and of hope, that he has only to understand it to find in it a fountain of peace and strength. It is natural for him amidst his infirmities to look on the dark side of things, but his faith reveals to him a bright side, a very bright side, and he will do himself wrong if he does not strive habitually to look upon it. Be it that all things are transient and changing in this world, and that he now sees their emptiness more than ever, the God whom he loves, in whom he trusts, his Father as well as his God, is without change, and He is the Portion of his heart, the Rock of his defence, his Shield and his exceeding great Reward. Be it that he has seen one generation after another passing away, rank after rank of his fellow-soldiers in the battle of life mown down by the scythe of death, and that he finds himself alone in the world, pining in solitude even though surrounded by crowds of travellers and soldiers younger than himself, his God is with him, the Father of his spirit is with him, and no fellowship can be more real or sustaining than this. Be it that he feels himself now at the very end of life, those things which were once in the future, objects of desire and ambition, being now and for ever in the past, stript of all their false halo—that he has come within a span of the very goal of his earthly existence, the point beyond which he can see nothing, what does it amount to but that he has reached within a span of the end of sin and sorrow, of care and toil?—that his earthly edu-

cation for his heavenly state is about being finished, and that in a few more months or years he will cease to be a child, and will possess all the strength and knowledge of a man? Be it that the aged Christian shrinks, as nature will shrink, from the grave and what men call the unknown future, let him remember that Christ hath abolished death and brought life and incorruption to light; that the future is no longer unknown, the veil having been taken away by Christ; that, whatever may be his own helplessness in the hour of the dread transition from time into eternity, he will hear a voice, well known and loved, saying, "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God."

Let the aged Christian accustom himself to meditate on these truths and hopes and promises of the gospel, until each of them shall be as habitually present and familiar to him as the countenance of his dearest friend, and he may expect to enjoy an elevation and a cheerfulness which will triumph over the labour and sorrow of his fourscore years. Or, if there be physical causes operating involuntarily and irresistibly to depress him, he will still find that the grace of the gospel does not leave itself without a witness in this assurance: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth their frame; he remembereth that they are dust."

There is a third thing which must be kept in view to make it sure that our old age shall be characterized by the fruitfulness and beauty of the palm-

tree. And it is something that concerns the young rather than the old. Whatsoever that is which we should like to be when we are old,—whatsoever grace or virtue we are pleased with, when we see it in others or should like others to see in us,—we must cultivate habitually all the days of our life. No sudden effort, no convulsive struggle, will make us at a bound what we ought to be. Most good things are of slow growth, need much culture, and are ripened only by time. If we would have our age distinguished by patience, gentleness, lovingness, consideration towards others, and by an all-abiding and all-pervading faith in God, we must seek to attain these excellencies in the season of health and of early life. If we are self-indulgent, self-seeking, imperious, fretful, distrustful of God, throughout life, much more shall we be all this when the feebleness of age has diminished our self-control.

We are often surprised by a manifestation of unlovely tempers on the part of aged Christians. These are the results of the former want of care in spiritual culture, and obtrude themselves so painfully on those whose duty it is to nurse the aged, that observers are perplexed, and do not know how to interpret what is so unseemly in persons who are supposed to be maturing for a higher state. What a joy it is, on the other hand, to see the excellencies which have been conscientiously cultivated by the Christian all his life long shining brightly and with all the freedom and spontaneousness of a second nature in the aged. The submission to God, the grateful recognition of his hand in every gift and mercy, the holy patience,

the loving self-forgetfulness, the desire to be useful to others : these bear witness to the rich grace of God in converting the autumn of decay into a scene of spiritual beauty. Thus, but thus only, may the aged become like the palm-tree, and realize the psalmist's description, and be fit to be transplanted from the house of the Lord on earth to a state of still greater beauty and fruitfulness in the heavenly paradise.

There is a German parable founded on the history of Solomon, in which the dependence of age on the previous life is shadowed forth. Pleasures, riches, and honours had so fascinated Solomon—so reads the parable—in the years of his manhood, that he forgot the bride of his youth, even Wisdom, and turned his heart to foolishness.

Once, as he was walking in his magnificent garden, he heard the voices of the creatures around him (for he understood their language), and he inclined his ear to hear what they were saying.

“ Behold,” said the lily, “ it is the king ; he passes proudly by me ; yet he is not arrayed like one of us.”

The palm-tree waved its boughs and said : “ Here cometh the oppressor of his country ; and yet they sing to him that he is like to a palm-tree. Where, then, are his boughs ? Where are his fruits with which he refreshes mankind ? ”

He went farther, and heard the nightingale sing to her mate : “ Solomon feels not a love like ours ; and therefore he is not truly loved by any of his concubines.” And the turtle-dove cooed to her mate : “ Of

all his thousand wives not one would lament over Solomon as I should mourn for thee, the one object of my love."

The king in anger quickened his step, and came to the nest of the stork, who was attending to his young ones, and bearing them up upon his wings, that he might teach them to fly. "King Solomon does not thus with his son Rehoboam," said the stork to his young ones; "therefore his son shall not prosper. Strangers shall rule over that which he has founded." Then went the king away to his innermost chamber, and was silent and troubled.

And as he sat immersed in thought, the bride of his youth, even Wisdom, stood invisibly before him, and touched his eyes. He sunk into a deep slumber, and saw a mournful vision of the latter days. He saw his kingdom rent asunder through the answer given by his infatuated son; and a stranger lorded it over ten tribes which had fallen away on account of his oppressions. He saw his palaces laid in ruins, his garden of delights swallowed up by an earthquake, the city spoiled, the country depopulated, the temple of God in flames. He started up from his sleep in terror.

And lo! the friend of his youth, with weeping eyes, stood visibly before him. "Thou hast seen," said she, "that which in like manner shall come to pass; and of all this thou hast laid the foundation." She disappeared, with a look of compassion on her countenance; and Solomon, who had crowned his youth with roses, in his old age wrote a book on the vanity of all things human in this world.

Old age without the consolations of the gospel must either be petrified into an unenviable insensibility or must be miserable, desolate beyond description. Nothing but these can make it other than a withered and shrivelled thing. "They have called me a child of fortune," said the great German Göethe, in his old age; "nor have I any reason to complain of the course of my life. Yet it has been nothing but labour and sorrow; and I may truly say, that in seventy-five years I have not had four weeks of true comfort. It was the constant rolling of a stone that was always to be lifted anew. When I look back upon my earlier and middle life, and consider how few are left of those that were young with me, I am reminded of a summer visit to a watering-place. On arriving one makes the acquaintance of those who have already been some time there, and leave the week following. This loss is painful. Now one becomes attached to the second generation, with which one lives for a time and becomes intimately connected. But this also passes away and leaves us solitary with the third, which arrives shortly before our own departure, and with which we have no desire to have much intercourse." Literature, with all its rewards and honours, could not irradiate the gloom that was settling down on the old age of this great but godless man.

How different from the cloud which rests on the tabernacle of the aged Christian—a cloud more of light than of darkness. "What are you doing?" said a minister, as he one day visited a feeble old man, who dwelt in a poor hovel—"What are you doing?" as he saw him sitting beneath the dripping

rafters in his smoky chamber, with his Bible open upon his knee. "Oh sir," was the reply, "I am sitting under His shadow with great delight, and his fruit is sweet to my taste." "I am advanced now, sir," said another aged man to a Christian visitor. And on being asked to explain what he meant, he said, "I was once His working servant, but now I am his waiting servant." What a joy in that thought. Waiting not for death, not for corruption, not for the hated but inevitable doom that should tear him away from the light of the sun, and from the things he loved on earth, but for the coming of his Lord, for the opening of the door through which he should pass into the light and life of perfect day.

"It is a favourite speculation of mine," said Dr. Chalmers, "that if spared to sixty, we then enter on the seventh decade of human life, and that this, if possible, should be turned into the sabbath of our earthly pilgrimage, and spent sabbatically, as if on the shores of an eternal world, or in the outer courts, as it were, of the temple that is above—the tabernacle in heaven. What enamours me all the more of this idea, is the retrospect of my mother's widowhood. I long, if God should spare me, for such an old age as she enjoyed; spent as if at the gate of heaven, and with a fund of inward peace and hope, such as made her nine years' widowhood a perfect feast and foretaste of the blessedness that awaits the righteous."

When he entered his sixty-first year, Dr. Chalmers wrote in his journal:—"March 17th, 1840. Entered the seventh decade of my life. I have looked long at this birthday as a great moral and spiritual epoch.

My God, enable me by prayer and performance to make it good. Quite sure that the acceptance of Christ, with a full reliance on him, and the confident appropriation of his righteousness, is the transition step to a life of happy and prosperous obedience. O my God, give me to hold this fast, and to realize by it a present salvation—the light, and liberty, and enlargement of one of thine own children. Oh that my heart were a fountain of gracious things, which might flow out with gracious influence on the hearts of my acquaintances, and more particularly of the members of my family.”

Mere rest, mere cessation from work, was not the sabbath which this good man desired. He had no wish to cease working for God, so long as he possessed strength and opportunity; and it is well known that, in consequence of the circumstances of his church, the last years of his life were years of incessant and exciting labour. But he never ceased to seek the realization of his favourite idea, of the years from sixty to seventy being the sabbath of his life; and although he did not live to see the close of that sabbath, long before his departure his character was evidently mellowing and ripening for heaven.

We know a little of the old age of three of the apostles, and, though but little, it is very instructive. It was an old age which, though afflicted and troubled, was spent under the shadow of the great Rock, and was cheered by the sure and certain hope of immortal youth.

In writing to Philemon, Paul speaks of himself as

“ Paul the aged.” How old he was we have no means of determining, but very probably but little, if at all, above sixty; yet it is not unlikely that he had the physical characteristics of a much older man. His constitution, at the best, apparently but feeble, must have been much broken by his labours, and perils, and trials. But now in his old age, instead of the repose and the many comforts which old age needed, he was a prisoner in a Roman jail; “ the prisoner,” he tells Philemon, “ of Jesus Christ.”

What a picture Paul might have given us of his prison life; a picture that should touch our hearts, and make our tears flow; a picture that should gather around his person our tenderest sympathies, and make us ashamed of the world we live in! But it is only by careful examination that we find out what his circumstances were; and while he was in a position the most distressing that can be imagined, we can discover no murmuring, no complaining. He “ knew how to be abased.”

Here is a lesson for all Christians, and for aged Christians especially. How common it is to dwell on our pains and privations, our disappointments and losses, our aches and sorrows. We obtrude them unconsciously on all who will listen to us. We want sympathy, and therefore must reveal our need of it; or in many cases we are selfish, and are so engrossed with ourselves and what we call our miseries, that nothing else can interest us, and we heed not what distress we inflict on others if we can only pour out the tale that fills our own bosom.

Would we have this selfishness rebuked and

abashed, we have only to visit Paul in his Roman prison. We may *see* how it is with him, but we shall *hear* very little from his lips of his sorrows and trials. If compelled to refer to them for any purpose, he will put into a few sentences what might be expanded into a volume. It is evident that something else occupies his thoughts more than his sufferings, and of that he will discourse to us freely. While affecting no stoical unconcern about what it must ever be hard for flesh and blood to bear, he will not fill our ears with his sorrows; his peaceful, serene, and cheerful demeanour will illustrate the words he wrote during his first imprisonment: "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."*

"Some murmur when their sky is clear,
And wholly bright to view,
If one small speck of dark appear
In their great heaven of blue:

"And some with thankful love are filled,
If but one streak of light,
One ray of God's good mercy gild
The darkness of their night."

What occupied the thoughts of "Paul the aged," and found utterance in his words, was the great cause for which he had laboured so long and suffered so much; and herein, too, he has left us a beautiful example. Worn out in that service for which he had

* Phil. iv. 11—13.

already five times received forty stripes save one, for which he had encountered so many perils by sea and land, and for which he was now about to lay down his life—it was as precious to him as ever, and he would spend his last days, not in sullen discontent over the hardships of his lot, but in doing what might still be left for him to do in order to guard and promote the kingdom of Christ after his decease. He had suffered the loss of all things for Christ's sake. Had he pursued the course on which he entered when he sat at the feet of Gamaliel, with so much devotion to the traditions of the fathers, he would by this time have been among the most influential and honoured of the spiritual rulers of his country. But here he was a prisoner in chains, exposed to such want and nakedness that he requested Timothy to bring him "the cloak which he had left at Troas." He had, too, the prospect of a speedy death; yet instead of repenting of the course which had brought him to such an end, he was never more intent on promoting its objects. When standing at the bar of Nero, in need of the strongest arguments which he could possibly urge to ensure the faintest hope of life and liberty, his chief concern was that Nero, and the heathen around his person and throne, should "fully know" the gospel which he preached. He was willing to sacrifice the last chance of saving himself, if he might but pour into the unwilling ears which he now addressed those blessed truths which they would hear in no other circumstances. Forsaken of all his friends, and with none standing by him but that invisible Friend who never forsook him,

he did not concern himself with the personal interests which were at stake, but put forth all his energy to commend Christ and the gospel to the cruel despot in whose hands his life was, and to the ministers of cruelty who stood by his side. A noble example of self-sacrificing devotion to the glory of Christ and the good of men!

We may remark in passing, that there is an indirect advantage of no mean order which accrues to sufferers from having their minds occupied with something else than their own sufferings. The world understands, but fearfully abuses, the secret of diverting the mind as a means of relief from sorrows. To divert the mind is, properly, to turn it aside from one object to another. But the world would divert it by turning it aside from things eternal to things temporal; from things which concern the soul's peace to trifles which will so occupy it as to leave no room for serious thoughts: a course as rational as that of the man who is bleeding to death, but who is unwilling to reflect on his condition, and resolutely thinks of something else till he can think no more. There is a truth, however, underlying this principle of diversion. It is a good thing to have the mind turned aside from brooding over its own sorrows; only let it be turned to thoughts that are wholesome and to works that are bracing to the soul's health. John Bunyan could forget the sorrows of Bedford Gaol, both when making long tagged laces to support his impoverished family, and when writing the "Pilgrim's Progress." Paul could forget the sorrows of his dungeon and chains when he girded himself for his last remaining

work, the composition of a letter in which he should bequeath his final counsels to the church of God. And when neither his pen could write nor his tongue speak for Christ, he still diverted himself from thoughts of pain and sorrow by thoughts of Christ and his redeemed church, and of the glory that shall be revealed.

Let sufferers by all means seek out and apply to their wounds the healing balm that is most suited to their particular case; but let them know that it will greatly aid the healing power of that balsam if they will turn away their minds' eye from their wounds, and occupy their hearts and hands with works of faith and labours of love, or whatsoever other duties the providence of God lays upon them. If they sit down to brood over their sorrows they will soon make themselves morbid and miserable; but if they arise, committing themselves and their sorrows to God, and do the work which their hands find to do, they will become partakers of a joy and of a spiritual elasticity for which they will not fail to give God thanks.

With "Paul the aged," whether he looked behind or before, it was all bright. "Though of sinners e'en the chief," when expecting the death, not of an old man, but of a martyr, he could say, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

The apostle Peter was an old man when he wrote his second epistle, and expected "shortly" to die. Thirty years before, his Lord had said to him, "When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." And all these thirty years Peter lived, one might say, under the shadow of the cross on which he was thus forewarned that he should "glorify God." Every time that he stretched forth his hands and girded himself for his day's work, these simple actions recalled the prediction of the death he was to suffer. We might imagine him haunted by echoes of the words of his Lord, and by visions of the cross to which his stretched forth hands were to be nailed in old age. And the life which he lived all these thirty years we might suppose naturally to be one of dejection and sorrow. But it was not so. We can trace no sign of gloom about him. He followed Christ with the full knowledge of what it should cost him, constrained to that "following" not by fear, but by the love which he thrice avowed on that memorable day when Christ foretold his death. The life which he lived was a life of faith, and hope, and joy. The cross to which that life was leading him did not darken his spirit. When very near to it he could think of it and speak of it with the most perfect calmness. He was concerned only to do what still remained for him to do of his Master's work. "I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remem-

brance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me. Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance." Again: "This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour."

Verily Peter's hope was what he himself called, "a living hope." It filled him with calm strength for duty and for trial. The incorruptible inheritance was before his mind, not as a shadowy dream, but as a glorious reality. The path to its possession might be very rough and very dark; but he looked beyond the cross to the crown, beyond the grave to the coming of the Lord. And, in words of solemn sound, we hear him saying, from the very foot of the cross on which his old limbs were to be stretched, "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth

righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." *

Of the old age of the apostle John we do not know much, but what we do know is very instructive. His last years were spent in labour and in suffering. The churches founded by Paul in Asia Minor seem to have become the scene of his labours, and the objects of his solicitude, after Paul's martyrdom. Thence it was that he was banished, in the reign of Domitian, to the isle of Patmos, "for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus." He was the last survivor of that holy band which Christ had commissioned and sent forth as the heralds of his mercy, and the ambassadors of his kingdom. And those who instigated the Roman tyrant to send him into exile may have had hopes—vain hopes, like those of the men who rolled the huge stone against the door of the sepulchre of Jesus, and sealed it with a great seal—that the want of his presence and authority in the churches of Asia would be a great blow to the Christian faith. But it was only overruled for good.

With a fair wind, the bark which carried this illustrious sufferer from the shores of Asia would in a few hours reach the isle of Patmos. And the scene which presented itself there to the eye of the apostle may be regarded as a fitting symbol of the dreariness and desolateness which we associate with old age. It was a bleak and barren rock, of rude and jagged outline, seven or eight miles long, and

* 2 Peter iii. 10—14.

from one to three broad, without inhabitants, except convicts, almost bare of trees, with a few vines and shrubs in a nook here and there, presenting on every side a cheerless aspect. And there the probability is, that even if he had not to work in the mines of which a later tradition tells us, he had to work in the quarries with other victims of imperial tyranny, and, it may be, with not a few convicts who were suffering "the just reward of their deeds." "Admit this thought, and the exile of the apostle has an element of new and deeper interest. He had laboured long and suffered much for Christ. In extreme old age, he doubtless thought the rough blasts of life were all blown. A few days more, and he should go home. Heaven was waiting for him: the crown of life was ready. Alas, instead of heaven, behold him in Patmos! instead of glory, see him toiling in the quarries! What wonder if at such a reverse the venerable old man wept! Blessed be God, the dark to-night issues in the bright to-morrow. Deep grief is often the precursor of holy and ecstatic joy. In the gloom of Patmos John saw the visions of God!"

"Thus the imperial edict, though unintentionally, sent him to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly of the church in heaven, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant; to hear and see how the blood of sprinkling was honoured before the eternal throne of God, and by all the godlike universe of being: for 'from the tops of the rocks' of Patmos he beheld beautiful visions of immortality, as well as prophetic visions of futurity. Thus his lone island in the Ægean Sea was to him a 'gate of

heaven ;' wider than Bethel to Jacob, or Horeb to the elders of Israel, or Tabor to Peter, or the Sanhedrim to Stephen. Who would not submit to exile, even on a solitary island, for the sake of such revelations?"

And, we may add, who would not submit to the privations and sufferings of old age, to be brought near to God and to the glory of the invisible world? Visions such as John's will not be granted to us; but his visions are recorded that we may have fellowship with him in listening to the sounds and gazing on the sights of the upper world. By faith we may behold our Lord and Saviour in the midst of the throne, "a Lamb as it had been slain,"—and join in the song, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." With this world fading from the sight of our dimmed eyes, and passing from the grasp of our feeble hands, we may have visions of the new Jerusalem and "the river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb," and may be conscious that we are already "laying hold" with no uncertain grasp "of eternal life." And thus, while the world can see no difference between us and others who are passing through the "evil days"* of old age, "when the strong men bow themselves,"—even as men could see no outward difference between John and other toilers under the imperial ban in Patmos,—we, like him, shall have our old hearts cheered and gladdened by the near prospect of that state of which

* Eccles. xii. 1.

“ a great voice from heaven ” assured him, “ 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.”

One other and last glimpse tradition gives us of this favoured apostle. Returning to Ephesus from Patmos, when or in what circumstances we do not know, it is told of him that when he was so feeble that he could no longer walk to the assemblies of the church, he caused himself to be carried thither by young men. He was not able to address the assembly, but he never failed to repeat the words, “ Little children, love one another.” He was already breathing the atmosphere of the world on the verge of which he stood ; and to his spirit the transition to the presence of the Saviour, from whom he had been separated for sixty years, would be easy and natural. The discipline of that long period had made him still more like to Christ than he was when he leaned on his bosom on earth.

Of old age in circumstances more akin to our own, perhaps few records are more instructive than that of the old age of Mrs. Schimmelpenninck, the history of whose finding rest under the shadow of the great Rock has already been told. Under that shadow she still found rest amid the infirmities of age, and many trials with which her heavenly Father was pleased to visit her.

On the last day of 1837, in the sixtieth year of her age, Mrs. Schimmelpenninck, while sitting by the

side of a friend and speaking with earnestness of the work of the Holy Spirit, was suddenly seized with paralysis. During the long illness which followed, her paralysis was followed by a restlessness which was more difficult to bear than pain; but it was borne, as were all her sufferings, meekly and cheerfully. "Truly it is a Divine power," said one who saw her at this time, "that can give wings to the soul, and elevate it above the infirmities of suffering nature, bestowing the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

Six months after, we find her able to write, as it is fit that a Christian should write, of the past and the future, in the language of deep gratitude and of fervent hope. "And now, my dear, my much-loved friend, though many of these pleasures are ended, many comforts continue, as we descend, still side by side and step by step, into the deep valley through which the Jordan flows that separates the wilderness from the blessed land of promise. How pleasant, as our sphere below in everything narrows, to feel that when things on earth fail, those above expand and send forth their roots in deep evening strength; and how sweet it is to talk with those who, by experience, can say that, in the sliding away of all, they find Him, the Rock, all-sufficient, and amidst the poverty of health and strength have his 'unsearchable riches' overflowing. Oh, let us cheer ourselves and each other with the thought of such a Saviour!"

About the same time, she wrote to another friend, "How, when we come to middle life, this earth, the land of shadows, begins to glide on our backward

view; and the eternal world, the world of realities, begins to grow upon the forward horizon! A brighter glory beams upon its everlasting hills; the bulwarks of the celestial city seem to start into rich tints of living light; and the songs of joy and hymns of thanksgiving, to meet our ear, as our eyes descry so many familiar and endeared faces amidst its blessed and happy inhabitants. Oh, how every religious tie, loosed in time, binds us faster to eternity!

“I believe I have had these feelings lately from my own ill-health having confined me many weeks to my room. As we go on in the voyage of life, how some grey hair, or some illness—like the land-bird or the gulf-weed to the toiling mariner—tells us that, though not yet in sight, the land is drawing near, the port is at hand; and happy, most happy, is he who, on a good foundation, expects the glad ‘Well done, thou faithful servant!’ of his King, and the glad welcome of his friends already landed, to cheer his spirit as he springs upon that happy land which is in reality his native shore.”

For nearly nineteen years from the time of her paralytic seizure, Mrs. Schimmelpenninck's life was prolonged; and frequently, during this period, her days were clouded by illness, if that, to use the words of her biographer, can justly be called a cloud which was lighted up by Divine consolations. “It was marvellous to see how she endured bodily suffering: great prostration of strength was, perhaps, harder to bear; and both were familiar to her. The word of God was her stay at such times. She would,

perhaps, have the 34th Psalm, or the 103rd, or the 121st, or the last verses of the 5th of Ephesians, read to her over and over again. She listened with sustained delight to those passages which declare the close union between Christ and his church. Her spirit was like that of a happy, confiding child, in the arms of its father."

In a letter which she wrote in 1849 to the friend of her youth, Catherine Gurney, then aged like herself, we see the Christian reviewing the discipline of the past, and anticipating the perfection of the future, in a spirit which indicates no small degree of ripeness for the joy and service of heaven. "How striking," she said, "how heart-affecting, and yet how consolatory it is, at the close of a long life, to look back upon the course of God's dealings with us, and to recognise, in a manner, the end wrought out through the varied stages of our earthly pilgrimage; what each friendship, each trial, each pursuit, was intended to accomplish; what strength each refreshment by the way gave us, and how far it was used to His glory; what wisdom was imparted by each discipline, and whether His message of love and mercy had been kept in our minds and pondered in our hearts; and what fruit it bore to life eternal! How encouraging, and yet how humiliating, is the review; humiliating, that we needed such reiterated chastisements, so much discipline, from the hand and heart of Him who is love; and yet encouraging, since that very discipline shows that he will never leave us nor forsake us, but that this God is our God, that He who *has* been *will* be our guide, even unto death, or

rather through the passage of death unto life eternal. . . .

“No new fire can be kindled without sending forth so much smoke that we are apt to think the evil greater than the good, till some wise attendant come, who, instead of putting out the fire, brings the bellows to give it more of the breath of life, and more fuel (like more truth) to feed upon, and stirs it well with reiterated blows to let the air, the breath of life, penetrate the very heart of the mass. And so, at last, this smoky little fire, which scarcely emitted a solitary spark of light, becomes a clear, steadfast, glowing flame, warming and enlightening all who draw near. Just so it is, I think, with the affections of early youth. Have patience, commit them to our Lord’s discipline, and according to the strength of the fire, if it be trained as a servant, not as a master, will be the light and heat given forth.

“And now, my dear Catherine, that we, who have so often stood together hand-in-hand, and taken counsel together heart to heart, in the beginning of our course, when as yet we knew not His voice who called us; now that we stand, as it were, on the verge of this mortal life, what can I wish for thee, but what I wish for myself, and what the church wishes for us all at the commencement of the ecclesiastical year: that our dear and faithful Lord may give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which his Son, our Saviour, came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day we may rise to life immortal, through Him who

is our Redeemer, our High Priest, our King, our peace in this life, and our chief joy in that which is to come, and which is to us how near! . . .

“And now farewell. May our Lord bless thee and be with thee, and may he be ever near to commune with us, and teach us in age as he invited us in youth. May he make us to lie down in green pastures, and lead us beside still waters. May he be with us in the valley of the shadow of death, and may his rod and his staff there support us. Goodness and mercy have followed us all the days of our life, and, oh, what remains for us to desire, but that we may dwell in the house of the Lord for ever?”

Writing to the same dear friend in 1850, she recalled their early days when their struggling souls were “like the imprisoned eagle beating against the bars of his prison,” and contrasted them with the peaceful years during which they had known the happiness of rest in God. “How did we go on,” she said, “vainly wandering in a chaos of doubts, and involving ourselves in a labyrinth of speculation, till the same God who at first caused light to arise amid the darkness, shone into our hearts, to give us the knowledge of his truth, and light, and love, in the face of Jesus Christ! How shall we sufficiently thank him? He taught us the darkness and emptiness of our hearts, and then he illuminated that darkness and satisfied that hunger. He taught us in measure to trust him, and oh, how has he repaid that trust by overflowing fulfilment!

“We sought light from reason, the candle lighted up by man for time. He bade us find it in revelation,

the sunbeam kindled by God, enlightening for eternity as well as time. Truly have we experienced that there is light in the evening.

“Has not our Lord led us through all the steps of our pilgrimage, even now until its close? We began in doubt, we end in certainty; we began by opinion, we end by experience; we began in conflict, we end in peace. Oh, shall we not end in joyful thanksgiving; and when we compare the past with the present, feel that his gracious love and unmerited mercy have indeed encompassed us with songs of deliverance? . . . O my dear Catherine, let us in conclusion, with heart and soul and spirit, say at the end of our course, ‘I will both lay me down in peace and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety.’ ‘As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.’”

There is nothing peculiar in all this, nothing that is not within the reach of every child of God. Old age may be happy. Old Christians ought to be happy. Their salvation is nearer than when they believed. Infirmary may produce a mental depression which is more physical than moral. But even then the darkness is not without light. And the Christian should not, in any circumstances, put away from himself the happiness of being able to say:—

“ One sweetly solemn thought
 Comes to me o'er and o'er :
 I'm nearer heav'n to-day
 Than I ever have been before :

- “ Nearer my Father’s house,
Where the many mansions be ;
Nearer the great white throne,
Nearer the crystal sea :
- “ Nearer the bound of life,
Where we lay our burdens down ;
Nearer leaving the cross,
Nearer gaining the crown.
- “ But lying darkly between,
Winding down through the night,
Is the dim and unknown stream
That leads me at last to the light.
- “ Closer, closer my steps
Come to the dark abysm :
Closer death to my lips
Presses the awful chrism.
- “ Saviour, perfect my trust,
Strengthen the might of my faith ;
Let me feel as I would when I stand
On the rock of the shore of death ;
- “ Feel as I would when my feet
Are slipping over the brink ;
For it may be I’m nearer home,
Nearer now than I think.”

CHAPTER XIII.

DEATH :

ITS DARK AND ITS BRIGHT SIDE.

CONTENTS.—The last great sorrow—"In vain we turn our eyes away"—Real or imaginary?—Vain reasonings answered—Seneca on the contempt of death—A dark side and a bright—Contrast between those who have faith and those who have not—The bright side—End of sorrow—With Christ—Education of character perfected—Proper symbols—Saladin—Halyburton—Vara—Mrs. Stuart Phelps—Rev. Henry Townley—Mrs. Kennedy—Verses by Robert Mc Cheyne.

"What is this world? A dream within a dream. As we grow older each step is an awakening. The youth awakes, as he thinks, from childhood: the full-grown man despises the pursuits of youth as visionary: the old man looks on manhood as a feverish dream. The grave the last sleep? No: it is the last and final awakening."—SIR WALTER SCOTT.

"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."—1 THESS. iv. 13—18.

- “ Thou inevitable day,
When a voice to me shall say—
‘ Thou must rise and come away ;
- “ ‘ All thine other journeys past,
Gird thee, and make ready fast
For thy longest and thy last.’
- “ Day deep hidden from our sight,
An impenetrable night,
Who may guess of thee aright ?
- “ Shall I lay my drooping head
On some loved lap, round my bed
Prayer be made and tears be shed ?
- “ Or at distance from mine own,
Name and kin alike unknown,
Make my solitary moan ?
- “ Little skills it where or how,
If thou comest then or now,
With a smooth or angry brow.
- “ Come thou must, and we must die :
Jesus, Saviour, stand thou by
When that last sleep seals our eye.”

ARCHBISHOP TRENCH.

DEATH :

ITS DARK AND ITS BRIGHT SIDE.

THERE *is* rest, then, under the shadow of the great Rock, for the weariest travellers through this world's wilderness. There is provision in the love and presence of the God of Consolation for the support of the most afflicted of his servants. Privation, poverty, bereavement, pain, old age, are not too hard to be borne by those whose God is the Lord. We are now in a position to repeat and maintain that the patriarch was no enthusiast, but had good reason for his confidence, when he said of his God,—“Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him;” and that the prophet was no vain boaster, but knew well whereof he affirmed, when he said,—“Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength . . . and he will make me to walk upon mine high places.”

But one sorrow yet remains, the deepest, darkest of all—the last of which mortal eyes see the shadow, or mortal ears hear the groan. And it is universal.

Other sorrows may be partial, endured by some, escaped by others. But there is no exemption from death. The healthiest and the sickliest travel towards one goal, and although the pace of the one may be less rapid than that of the other, it leads as certainly to the desolateness and forgetfulness of the grave. Is there provision in Christ's holy gospel for this last and heaviest of our mortal sorrows? There is peace for us amid the storms of *life*; may we find peace in *death*?

It is in vain that we refuse to look on the darkness or try to persuade ourselves that it is more imaginary than real. "The earth has lasted six thousand years," says one, "and with the exception of those at present alive, the millions who have breathed upon it—splendid emperors, horny-fisted clowns, little children in whom thought has never stirred—*have* died. And what they have done, we also shall be able to do. It may not be so difficult, may not be so terrible, as our fears whisper." But it *may be* more difficult and more terrible. And what then? Shall we leave it to a peradventure and stake our eternity on a chance? Shall we do this, although the strongest power in our nature, the truest and last witness for God in our souls, conscience, unhesitatingly echoes the declaration of Scripture, that after death is the judgment?

"In nature," we are told by others, "death is as beautiful as life, as needful, and for that reason as good." Have those who thus speak ever heard of the fact so plainly recorded, or do they disbelieve it,—"By one man sin entered into the world, and death

by sin"? In vain they tell us of the decaying leaves from which in the spring new generations of things beautiful burst, and without which no troops of flowers would arise to sweeten the breath of summer. In vain they tell us that new races spring—phoenix-like—from the ashes of those which have expired; and persuade us that as there is no weeping in the forest, no words of sorrow in the solitude when the tree falls and rots, so neither should we weep when death enters our home. In vain do they by such reasonings as these assure men that he whom they dread is no king of terrors after all. The dominion of death over the children of men, as Archbishop Trench has well said, “has only its outer signs in common with that which, going by the same name, befalls the inferior creatures of the earth. The significance of it is wholly different. Other creatures die, if indeed the vanishing away of the pale shadows of life which they possess can be called death, but man only knows that he dies. Other creatures fear pain, but man only fears death, and, however broken in to it by much use, resents death, and in some sort obscurely feels that he has a right to resent it, and indignantly demands why he was made mortal. In vain he is reminded by those who have no stronger consolation to offer, no better account of the matter to give, that he has had his turn, that it is only fair that, as a satisfied guest, he should make room at life’s feast for others; that life was given to all for use, to none for possession. In vain he is assured that he has invested this which he fears with imaginary terrors. It still remains to him the thing which his

nature conceives as most abhorrent to it, and which it revolts at the most. . . . Is there not in every shuddering and shivering fear which any man has ever felt, as he drew near to the gloomy river of death, a witness and a protest that, according to the first law of his being, he was never made to pass through its dark waters?" The true interpretation of man's fear of death is, that death was not the original law of his being, but has entered the world "by sin," and that "after death is the judgment." The tree has no future but that which exists in the new tree to whose life it may contribute. Man, every man, has his own individual, personal future, an existence which is indestructible, and whose weal or woe is dependent on present character.

Death, then, has a dark side, a very dark one; and no folly can exceed the folly of him who shuts his eyes and persuades himself that the darkness is all imaginary, except the folly of those who think they have attained the highest wisdom when they have learned to *despise* death. "This we are sure of," said Seneca, "the fear of death is a continual slavery, as the contempt of it is certain liberty"—a sentiment worthy of the man who taught that "hope and fear are the bane of human life." And yet "it is a hard task," he had to confess, "to master the natural desire of life by a philosophical contempt of death, and to convince the world that there is no hurt in it, and crush an opinion that was brought up with us from our cradles." Our nature cannot be unmade in this fashion; hope and fear will belong to it as long as the world lasts. That death

is to be feared is not an opinion instilled into our minds from our cradles, but a sentiment born with us. And if those who did not know the sad history of man's subjection to death, and understood but very imperfectly what may be expected after death, found it difficult to "master the natural desire of life," and to attain a "contempt of death," either through philosophical argument or by the examples that were set before them of heroes and gladiators and suicides; much more shall we, before whose eyes the veil hath been taken away from both the past and the future, the cause and the consequence, of death. I cannot, I dare not, despise death. I must first unlearn that it has entered the world by sin, and that after it comes the judgment. If I am to be delivered from the fear and bondage of it, it must be in some other way.

Death, then, we repeat, has a dark side, a very dark side, so dark that even inspired men when they gazed on it were oppressed by the vision. "As for man his days are as grass: as a flower of the field so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more." "My breath is corrupt, my days are extinct, the graves are open for me." "One dieth in his full strength being wholly at ease and quiet. And another dieth in the bitterness of his soul and never eateth with pleasure. They shall lie down alike in the dust and the worms shall cover them." "Verily man at his best state is altogether vanity."

But death has a bright side as well as a dark. The dark is turned toward us and casts its shadow over

the entire road we travel from our birth to our grave, and we find it often hard to believe that death is not all darkness. Nor is this to be wondered at. The clouds above us are sometimes so dense that they completely shut out everything beyond them from our view. Sun, moon, and stars, are to us as if they were not. And if by some chance a ray of light or a flash of lightning plays for a moment on the surface of the cloud, it is only to make the darkness more palpable and appalling. In these circumstances it requires both reflection and imagination to realize the fact that the other side of the cloud is all brightness. On that other side the sun shines brilliantly, and sheds a light serene and beautiful without an eye to see it but that of God; while the side nearest to us, and which alone we see, is by its thick darkness sending dismay into our souls. Even so is it with death. Happily, the brightness which is on the other side, and which is as "the light of seven days," penetrates to this side, illumines our path and cheers our hearts, as we approach and enter the darkness.

But this brightness beyond, and the light and hope which stream to us from it, even while on this side the grave, are not of nature but of grace. They do not result from the mere assurance of a future state and of immortality—an assurance which, if not accompanied with the knowledge of a Saviour, only adds to the terrors of the grave. They result from faith in Him by whom both sin and death are abolished, by whom atonement for sin has been made, and at whose word death shall surrender its long-captive prey.

What a contrast between those who have this faith and those who have it not! "I tremble," said one,—

"I tremble from the edge of life, to dare
The dark and fatal leap, *having no faith*,
No glorious yearning for the Apocalypse;
But like a child that in the night time cries
For light, I cry; forgetting the eclipse
Of knowledge and of human destinies."

"I tread the common road into the great darkness," said another who had no faith, "without any thought of fear, and with very much of hope. Certainty, indeed, I have none." "No fear," when there is reason to fear, is not a good but an evil. Hope that is not well founded is worse than no hope. The mere courage of one who is only risking a great per-adventure, is not the courage which we should like to feel in so great a crisis as death.

But let us hear the Christian, the man of faith. Dr. James Robertson, an eminent clergyman of the Church of Scotland, when told within a few days of his death that the night was cold and dark, said, "Ah, but it is a clear night within." To a Christian medical attendant he said, "I would gladly have remained a little longer and worked God's work, had such been his blessed will; but if he sees it best to take me now, I am ready." "Have you peace?" asked his wife. "I am nothing but a poor sinner," was the reply, "but I am a sinner longing for Jesus, and I have peace and hope. I believe that this night I shall enter on everlasting rest and glory."

In 1860, a young poet entered London in search of fortune and fame, his heart burning with ambition to make himself a name, and to be buried in Westminster

Abbey! But disease soon arrested the vain, proud course on which he had entered, and he was almost maddened by the disappointment which befell him. "My crown is laid in the dust for ever," he wrote in 1861, in the near prospect of his end. "Nameless, too! How that troubles me! Had I but written an immortal poem, what a glorious consolation!" And while thus almost cursing his lot, and bemoaning his condition with a bitterness which no words could express, his chief friends, full of kindness to him, knew no better comfort to offer him than they found in the pages of heathen moralists. "I know," said one of them, "how easy a thing it is to give counsel, and how poor is consolation; but still I must expect you to be brave and resigned, and to feel that, above being a poet, is the power of being a man. There is much in this world far sadder and crueller than the thought of leaving it; and the old Greeks counted every man happy who died young." "Well, if matters are as you say," wrote another—"which, however, I will not wholly believe till the good physician whom I have asked to examine your chest reports it hopeless—we must accept them as we best can, you know, and see what is to be done under the inevitable conditions, and before looking in those trans-mortal directions to which good folks usually seem to think it imperative to turn their dying eyes, forgetting that the long sweet habit of earthly perception is not to be unlearned in a day, let us try what we can do on this side the eternal threshold." And thus the poor dying youth was counselled to confine his vision to this world as long as he could, and if he could not attain the fame

of a great poet, at least to play the man and face death bravely. Alas! it was in vain. He could only, like the imprisoned bird, strike his wings against the bars of his cage and die because he must.

But let us see how another young poet, *having faith*, was able to die. Michael Bruce was a youth of fervent piety, amiable heart, and true genius. His parents were very poor, and had to hire out their children to herd cattle on the Lomond Hills. For six successive summers was Michael thus employed. On those hills, however, he did more than feed the flocks of others; he fed his own ardent mind with the ideas of sublimity and beauty which the surrounding scenery suggested and awakened. This youth aspired to the holy work of the Christian ministry, and a good Providence enabled him, though amid many difficulties, to enter on a course of preparatory study. But his earthly prospects were blighted by disease, and the hope of recovering was soon abandoned. In an ode to spring, he said,—

“ Now spring returns, but not to me returns
The vernal joy my better years have known;
Dim in my breast life's dying taper burns,
And all the joys of life with health are flown.”

But this was far from being the language of despair or complaint. The “joys of life” were precious to his young heart, and he could not part with them without a sigh. But he had a hope full of immortality. His friend and fellow-student George Lawson (afterwards D.D.) visited him on his death-bed, and found “his countenance pale as death, while his eyes shone like lamps in a sepulchre.” “I am

happy to see you so cheerful," said Lawson. "Why should not a man be cheerful on the verge of heaven?" said the dying poet. "But," said Lawson, "you look so emaciated, I am afraid you cannot last long." "You remind me," was the reply, "of the story of the sailor whose ship was wrecked, and who, when told that the vessel was sinking, replied, 'Let it sink; it is not mine.' I say with the sailor, 'Let my body fall, it is not mine.'"

Very soon after this Michael Bruce died, in the twenty-first year of his age. His Bible was found on his pillow, marked down at Jeremiah xxii. 10, "Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him;" and on the blank leaf this verse was written:

" 'Tis very vain for me to boast
How small a price my Bible cost :
The day of judgment will make clear
'Twas very cheap, or very dear."

Christians, like Michael Bruce, may well be "cheerful" when standing on the brink of the grave, because they are there on the "verge of heaven." The bright side of death, of which their faith assures them, is as real as the dark side before which men have so much reason to tremble.

The poor man of our Lord's parable was carried when he died into Abraham's bosom. When Stephen was surrounded by the murderers who were thirsting for his life he looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. When Paul was anticipating a speedy martyrdom, he said, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness,

which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me in that day.”

Stephen and Paul, honoured as they were, had no privilege in this matter of dying which does not belong to all who are in Christ. The glory of God which Stephen saw on the other side of the shadow of death which was gathering around him, is still there. The crown which Paul anticipated, he tells us expressly, belongs equally to all who love the Lord's appearing. And not a few of Paul's sayings point to the brightness of the other side of death. “All things are yours; whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours.”* “We are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”† “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.”‡ “Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.”§ The Master's own sayings, likewise, point to the bright side of death. “In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”|| “I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.”¶

* 1 Cor. iii. 22.

† 2 Cor. v. 6, 8.

‡ Phil. i. 21, 23.

§ Rom. xiv. 8.

|| John xiv. 2, 3.

¶ John xi. 25, 26.

And then the "saying" of the Holy Spirit crowns all by its explicitness, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."

This blessedness must be realized to be fully understood. But even in the present life we can know in part wherein it consists.

The mere fact of deliverance from all trouble and sorrow is enough to make Christians rejoice. Of the grave, Job said of old, "There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest. There the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and great are there; and the servant is free from his master."* And, without tasting Job's bitterness of soul, or being driven to the verge of madness, as he was, by accumulated suffering and unjust aspersions, we can appreciate the truth and beauty of his words. There is a pathos and tenderness about them which seem to soothe and calm the breast. We turn away from turmoil and unrest, oppression and cruelty, and see in the grave only its repose, and its protection from wrong, and are comforted with the thought that there is a refuge from the wicked and a rest for the weary.

True, when we think of the grave in relation to many who enter it, the consolation which the idea of its repose imparts is subject to a great drawback. The rest of the grave, when narrowly considered, becomes a fiction. Death terminates bodily suffering, but it hands over the body which it delivers from suffering to uttermost corruption and dissolution. And to the

* Job iii. 17—19.

soul death may be only the beginning of sorrows—sorrows, to escape from which it would most gladly come back into the body, even if its return should be a return to the hands of the oppressor and the wrongdoer. So that those whom we congratulate as having escaped from the world's troubles, and as having reached that common abode of great and small, where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest, may have passed into a condition still less desirable than that from which they have gone.

But, in contemplating the Christian's death, there is no drawback, no misgiving of this sort. The grave is to him a bed of peaceful rest. His body is no longer the occasion or the seat of suffering. The stripes of the taskmaster, and the fires of the persecutor, can reach it no more. Aches and pains, weariness and languor, are gone for ever.

“ Hear what the voice from heaven proclaims
For all the pious dead :
Sweet is the savour of their names,
And soft their sleeping bed.

“ They die in Jesus, and are blest ;
How kind their slumbers are !
From sufferings and from sins released,
And freed from every snare.”

From the grave where the body lies, we look to the heaven where the spirit dwells ; and in that heaven the redeemed “ 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." *

We feel how full of comfort this thought is when the aged die—those whose fourscore years have brought them only travail and sorrow. We have gazed on their enfeebled frames, and witnessed the infirmities of their second childhood; and have felt, notwithstanding our reluctance to lose them, how little there is in their mode and state of life to make it desirable that life should be prolonged. And when Providence has taken them from us, we have felt it no small comfort to think that feebleness, and pain, and suffering, are past, and that wearied body and wearied spirit are alike at rest.

In the case of the young it seems otherwise. To them life is enjoyment, and strength, and hope; and to be cut off from life is to be cut off from good, not from evil. Yet the difference between the old and the young is not so great as it seems. Life, at the best, is full of trouble. The sunshine of the brightest morning is overcast with many clouds; and if the young were gifted with prophetic foresight they would often cry, "Let me hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest," rather than "chatter like a crane, or mourn like a dove," as Hezekiah did, that they are "deprived of the residue of their years." The sorrows of even the earlier portions of life are sufficient, both in themselves and as the earnest of evils to come, to make us find comfort in the thought

* Rev. vii. 16, 17; xx. 4.

that death has placed them beyond the reach of all affliction and pain. Had they lived, who can tell what their future would have been—what disappointments, what disasters, what agony, what anguish, might have been their lot? But now they have gone where neither the peradventures nor the certainties of earthly sorrow can follow them. All that was mortal of them lies where the weary are at rest, and the immortal is with God in the kingdom of his glory. This is the bright side of death.

But it is far from being the whole of it. In death, Christians attain that completeness and perfection which are the very end of all earthly discipline and training. Our life is divided by death into two parts: the former very brief, the latter without end; but the whole condition and character of the latter depend on the former as certainly as the produce which is reaped in autumn depends on the seed which was sown in spring. When the Christian dies his harvest is come. The result of sowing and watering, of all culture and training, are now attained; and, instead of lamentation and woe, it is fitting that there should be the joy of harvest and the celebration of harvest-home.

The season of growth and ripening varies much more as to length in the spiritual world than in the natural; and the great Husbandman has reasons of his own, of which he does not inform us, for protracting it in some cases and shortening it in others. But when the harvest is early—when young Christians die—shall we weep on that account? Shall we weep that their days of training have not been

prolonged, that they have not been exposed for more years to those vicissitudes of weather, of cloud and sunshine, by which ripening is effected? Shall we not rather rejoice that they have so soon attained the perfection of their being?

Turning to another Scriptural figure, according to which Christians are represented as *edified* or *built up*, shall we mourn that the structure of Christian character is completed so soon, and the top-stone put so early on the spiritual temple which the Holy Spirit has prepared for a habitation of God? While the structure is in process of building, there must be dust and din, much awkward and unsightly scaffolding, many discordant sounds. Shall we mourn that the scaffolding has been pulled down? that all discordant sounds have ceased? and that God has claimed it for his own fair temple? Would we protract the process of building, with all its disagreeable accompaniments, after the great Builder has pronounced the work to be finished?

We often see a broken column erected on a tomb—the tomb probably of one who has died young, or who has died while life seemed still incomplete. And such a monument is not without its significance. But it points rather to despair than to hope, to disappointment than to fruition. The inscription that should accompany it was furnished by Job in his hour of bitterness:—“My days are passed, my purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart. I have made my bed in darkness. I have said to corruption, Thou art my father: to the worm, Thou art my mother, and my sister.”

Put no such monument, we would say, on the young Christian's grave. There is nothing incomplete in his life, nothing premature in his death. Many of the purposes of his heart may be unaccomplished, but they have been accepted by the Master instead of the fulfilment. And the Master's own purpose is accomplished; *his* work is finished. The Christian has been prepared by a brief but sufficient training for his eternal state. Character has been matured and perfected. The very end for which earthly discipline was instituted and applied has been realized. This is the bright side of death.

I once saw a beautiful symbol on the grave of a young Christian—a butterfly rising out of its chrysalis state to enjoy its perfect though brief life in the sunshine. It was designed to set forth the change which had already passed on the precious one that was gone, when her spirit left the body; and also the change which will take place at the resurrection, when “this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality.” Put such symbols as this on their tombs if you will, but write on them no words of despair. Engrave on the marble such oracles of hope as these:—“When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory.”—“If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.”—“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”—“The last enemy, death, shall be destroyed.”—“As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”

Verily death has a bright side; while it seems to

be man's destruction, it is, in reality, the Christian's perfecting. And the young Christian, instead of being cut off in the midst of his course, and deprived of the residue of his years, only reaches the goal before his older friends, and, instead of being the object of lamentation and wailing, might almost excite the envy of those who have still to traverse the sunburnt and toilsome road of life's wilderness.

Of the pure and blessed condition which follows death, the Spirit of Inspiration has wisely told us but little. It would overstrain our present powers to form any adequate conception of those things which God has prepared for them that love him. But this we know in general, that, with a happy freedom from sin and sorrow, there will be in the new condition to which we go ample opportunity for the exercise of all our perfected powers, bodily and mental. And this implies far more than words can describe. We often marvel at what the human body is now capable of doing, and we know something of the glowing satisfaction which a sense of health and the exercise of strength impart. But we cannot know what the spiritual body will be capable of doing and of enjoying. A body it will still be—matter spiritualized, but not changed into spirit—and all we can say of it is, that, in an outward condition suited to it, its capabilities and enjoyments will transcend those of the natural body, as the heavens are higher than the earth. The world to come, whereof we speak, will have none of the drawbacks and defects which this world has; and the bodies that shall inhabit it will have none of the

disease and infirmity to which our bodies are subject now. With an outward world all perfect, and a body all perfect, both of a kind very different from the present, but both divinely adapted to each other; who will doubt that the other side of death is bright, very bright, whatever may be the darkness of the side that is nearest to us now?

If the realization of this bodily perfection is in any sense distant, being consequent on the resurrection, the spirit's perfection follows death immediately. The spirits of the just in heaven, though represented as waiting for the adoption, even the redemption of the body, are represented likewise as already "made perfect." Absent from the body, they are present with the Lord. And this expression gives us that notion of heaven which is at once most intelligible and most delightful. When straining our eyes to discern some of the forms which characterize heavenly things, and our ears to discern some of the notes of heavenly music, and our minds to understand the new relations and fellowships of God and his saints, we find a resting-place to our jaded spirits in the words, so familiar to us—"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also." What more would we have? When shrinking from the unknown, the mysterious future, is it not enough to be assured that we are going to Christ, that we shall be with Christ? In his name is comprehended everything that is attractive to our

renewed hearts, everything that can inspire confidence, everything to banish fear. No storm ever raged on earth which he had not power, even in the days of his humiliation, to quell; no danger from which he could not deliver; no good which he could not bestow. His presence was the pledge of safety even in the tempest; it was the pledge of life even in the chamber of death; it was the pledge of peace and joy amid distress and disease. All this, while yet he wore the garb of a servant, and submitted to hunger and thirst and weariness, on earth. What must his presence be in heaven! It must be heaven itself. "Present with the Lord"—no affection of the soul can turn back on itself, pained that it can find no object worthy of it; no want of the soul can be unsatisfied. In his presence our spirits, with the most enlarged capacities and desires, shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, for he shall feed them, and lead them to fountains of living water. His words to John are an earnest of what his presence will be to all who are partakers of like faith:—"Fear not: for I am the first and the last, and the living one."

Say, then, if the other side of death be not bright, bright beyond all present power of imagining? "With Christ"—we shall find the amplest scope for the exercise of every gift we possess, if not in feeding the hungry and reclaiming the sinner, yet in other ways that shall conduce to the honour of our Lord, and the social happiness of those who constitute his heavenly kingdom. We may mourn that this earth of ours, overgrown as it is with the thorns and

thistles of ungodliness and error, should lose the benefit of the gifts of Christians. But let us not dream that these gifts are wasted. The great Giver did not bestow them in vain. He has not destroyed them by death. They have been transferred to another sphere, where their eternal exercise will vindicate his wisdom.

These views should comfort us greatly concerning the dead who have died in the Lord. They are not lost, but gone before. We are on the dark side of death, they are on its bright side. If we weep, it should be for ourselves, not for them. The change which has passed upon them has translated them from a sorrowful to a sorrowless condition. They have attained the very end for which an earthly life was given them—even fitness and ripeness for a heavenly, the completing and perfecting of character. They have reached the shore of the promised land, while we are still on the billows of this restless and dangerous life. They are now with Him, in whose presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore. “Ye are the children of the Lord your God,” said Moses to Israel of old; “ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead” (Deut xiv. 1). No, no, we shall not take up the heathen wail of despair. We shall not rend our garments, nor put on sackcloth and ashes. Our voice shall not be heard like that voice in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted, because they were not.

What is told of Saladin on his death-bed was well

and fit for him to do. "Prepare and bring to me my winding-sheet," said the Moslem conqueror with the firm voice which had commanded legions. "Bring hither the banner round which my chosen guards have rallied in so many victories." The banner was immediately brought. "Remove those silken folds," said the Sultan, "and attach to the staff, in their stead, the winding-sheet." It was done. The dimmed eye of the dying monarch gazed upon the winding-sheet as it hung from the staff around which he had so often rallied his legions on fields of blood, and then he said,—“Let the crier, accompanied by the musicians, in a funeral dirge pass through the streets of Damascus, and at every corner wave this banner, and proclaim, ‘This is all that remains of the mighty Saladin.’”

All this was fitting in one who now felt the vanity of the glory he had toiled to win, and to whom the future was unmingled darkness. No wailing could be too bitter, no emblem too black for such an occasion. But the position of the Christian is far other than that of Saladin. "I have a father and a mother and ten brothers and sisters in heaven," said Halyburton, "and I shall be the eleventh. Oh! blessed be God that I was ever born! The thing I rejoice in is this, that God is altogether full; and that in the Mediator, Christ Jesus, is all the fullness of the Godhead, and it will never run out. If there be such a glory in Christ's conduct towards me now, what will it be to see the Lamb in the midst of the throne! My peace has been like a river. Blessed be God that I was ever born!" "No, no!" said

Vara, a South Sea Island chief, once a heathen, but for many years a consistent Christian, when asked if he was afraid to die—"No, no! The canoe is in the sea, the sails are spread; she is ready for the gale. I have a good Pilot to guide me, and a good haven to receive me. My outside man and my inside man differ. Let the one rot till the trumpet shall sound, but let my soul wing her way to the throne of Jesus!" A jubilant song is more fitting in such circumstances than a plaintive dirge.

It is the duty as well as the privilege of Christians to look steadily and habitually on the bright side of death. They cannot feel too deeply the solemnity of dying and going into the presence of the great Judge of all. But their eye and their imagination sometimes occupy themselves too exclusively with those aspects of it which are repulsive, and which excite melancholy without producing any salutary impression on the heart or life. We are told of Mrs. Phelps, the daughter of Professor Moses Stuart of Andover, that, long after she had learned to think and speak of her own death with a calm hopefulness, she could not meet with composure the death of friends. "Their lifeless remains, the bier, the pall, the tolling bell, the slow procession, the grave, each and all were intensely painful to her. They formed permanent scenes in her mind's eye, remaining sometimes for weeks and even months; she often refrained from sleeping for many hours of a night, because her imagination was so much more painfully active in the creation of such scenes in her dreams than in her waking thoughts."

This morbid state of feeling was the result of an oversensitive constitution, acted upon by early circumstances. In childhood, the central object in the circle of her religious thoughts, we are told, was death. "My nurse," she said, "used to take me to almost all the funerals that took place in the village, and at last I was fond of going to them, not because death had become any the less terrible, but because there was something in the exciting stir of so strong an emotion and deep grief which suited my nature. I loved to have my feelings powerfully worked upon; and in that still village no agent could do this like death. I can remember, as far back as when I was but three years old, and from that time onward, having again and again cried myself to sleep because I must some time or other see my mother die."

This morbid association of death with her childish feelings was never wholly broken; but she was conscious that it produced no spiritual good; and one great aim of her pen, when she became a writer, was to give a healthier direction to the thoughts of children. Of her own children she said, "I want a cheerful Christian home for them to grow up in; I want them to be happy Christians; I believe that is the best style of piety. I suffer from the want of a cheerful spirit, yet I do think I am enabled to rise above my constitutional gloom better than I once did." And when death came to herself, although the desire of life, *for the sake of her children*, was intensely strong, and was the occasion of a severe and long-continued conflict, as soon as she was convinced that

the struggle for life was hopeless, and that God was calling her to himself, she gave up all without a moment's hesitation. "Without a tear her eye turned on Death; she placed her hand in his;" and after repeating a line of one of her favourite hymns—

"Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood,"

she added, "It is delightful to stand on the banks."

"Happy Christians" this good woman wished her children to be; and *happy* all Christians may well be, even in the near prospect of death. To them, with all its solemnity, it is not a King of Terrors, for its sting is gone. Having rest under the shadow of the great Rock, they can trust Him by whose grace they have been brought so near to the heavenly kingdom. They are "burdened," indeed, with infirmity, and groan as others do; but they have prospects which others have not, and "earnestly desire to be clothed upon with their house which is from heaven." Not that they "would be unclothed"—stript of the body in which they have so long dwelt, and which has been to them as a part of themselves—but that they desire a better dwelling-place, and long for a condition that shall be free from disease and disorder and sorrow—one in which "mortality shall be swallowed up of life."* They know, moreover, that He who has led them thus far will perfect his own work, and bring them to their journey's goal in the heavenly rest. The good Shepherd who has gone before them, whose voice they have heard and known, whom they have followed to the very bank of the dark river,

* 2 Cor. v. 1-5.

will not leave them there. In a scene witnessed by a recent traveller beside one of the streams which flow from Lebanon, the flock is described as following its shepherd to the stream and through it. Some sheep entered boldly and went straight across—others entered in doubt and alarm. These missed the ford, and were carried down the river; yet, one by one, they all struggled over, and made good their landing. A tender lamb was swept away towards the sea; but the shepherd leaped after it, took it in his bosom, and bore it trembling to the shore. And thus it is with the sheep of Christ's pasture. In their dying hour Christ is near to uphold them. They hear his loving voice saying, "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." With their eye fixed on him, some scarcely see the stream through which they are passing, or feel its cold and threatening waves. None of all his true flock shall ever perish. Even the tenderest lambs shall be carried safely over. The most timid, who trembled to put their feet in the stream, shall join the rest of the saved flock in the presence of Him by whom their sins were pardoned, and their souls sanctified.

The death-bed of the Rev. Henry Townley, who gave up bright secular prospects in youth to serve Christ in the ministry of the gospel, and whose character through a long life was one uniform *adorning* of the doctrine of God his Saviour, was a scene of more *joy* than falls to the lot of most

Christians ; but not of more than all Christians might possess in the near prospect of being with Christ, unless their minds are clouded by disease, or temptation, or sin. Sometimes in the midst of agony he would say, "My body is full of pain, my soul is full of glory." When reminded that his sufferings were wisely appointed by his heavenly Father, he replied, "I am thankful for them. I would not be without them : they are for my good : they give me an opportunity of glorifying God." He often spoke of the comfort to be derived from the prayer of Jesus Christ in his sorrow, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me : " adding, in our Lord's words, "the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it ?" "My prospect," he said, "is unclouded ; the enemy is as still as a stone. Were it not for the heaviness of the flesh, I could run up and down Highbury-place, singing and shouting for joy. I have not a particle of a cloud ; I am surprised that the enemy has been kept at such a distance—I did not expect it ; I should have thought it arrogant in me to presume that Satan would be kept so far away." When one said to him, "Your peace is unspeakable," he added, "Yes, and full of glory. I am full of happiness to the brim." His moments of extreme agony and pain were beguiled by prayers, thanksgivings, and intercessions. "Blessed be God," he would say, "another pain is gone—one less to be endured—I am one step nearer to that happy world where there shall be no more pain—thanks for the grace given."

No wonder that when this joyous sufferer, who

gloried day by day that the hours were shortening which stood between him and the unveiled face of his Saviour, fell asleep, those around his bedside, by a common and irresistible impulse, knelt down, and gave thanks for him who had gotten, and to Him who had given, the victory.

The presence and faithfulness of Christ are not less clearly and certainly manifested in the experience of Christians from whom the tempter has not been kept so far as in the case of Mr. Townley, or whose minds have been depressed by the influence of disease. The author witnessed the dying of a Christian lady, in the eighty-fourth year of her age, than which, in its mingled complexion of conflict and victory, he has read of none more instructive in the pages of biography. Filial affection would prompt him to describe her character; but he will only venture to say that none who knew her ever failed to remark her holiness and unselfishness. For more than sixty years she had served the Lord with steadfast consistency. And during the last weary months of her life, in the endurance of severe and protracted suffering, which she felt keenly, her "ruling passion"—the Christian virtue which had won the hearts of many—appeared in all its strength; she must still, while herself the object of much care and solicitude, care for others. When friends were watching the progress of symptoms which indicated approaching death, and when she was herself longing to depart, she could look around and concern herself with the circumstances and wants

of each weeper by her bedside, and give instructions relative to their comfort and welfare.

For months after she was confined to her sick chamber, her experience was all that might have been hoped for in one distinguished for her consistent and cheerful piety. Her mind was kept in perfect peace, and with wonder and thankfulness she often remarked how easy and peaceful her dying was. But, before the end came, she had to pass through cloud and storm. "She had deceived herself all her life long," Satan seemed to say to her—for she had a strong conviction that *his* hand inflicted her mental suffering, although she could not at the time take comfort from the thought that it was from him and not from the Spirit of God such suggestions came. "How did she know that her sins were pardoned, and that she had a right to lay hold on the promises of the gospel?" So vivid were her impressions of the presence of the tempter in these thoughts, that she would cry out in her agony, "I know who you are, Satan; get you behind me. I know whom I have believed, and that he is able and willing to save me to the uttermost." And then it would seem as if the tempter fled. A heavenly calm succeeded the storm. Again and again the battle had to be fought, but always with the same happy result. How far her trial arose from Satanic temptation or was the mere fruit of her nervous exhaustion, it is not given to us to know. But, throughout, there was no room to question whose she was and whither she was going. With a happy inconsistency, even when her mind was

troubled, she was impatient to depart and be with Christ; and this was the only impatience she ever manifested. Her one hope was in the precious doctrine of Cowper's hymn,—“There is a fountain filled with blood,”—a hymn which was never read to her without eliciting an expression of holy joy. When reminded of Christ's own experience in Gethsemane, she felt the lesson which it teaches, and said often with deep feeling, “The Lord's will, the Lord's will be done.” Her tenderness of conscience was almost morbid, and her desire to be made *perfectly holy* was intense and burning. She could say, “Thou knowest all things: thou knowest that I love thee.” But oh! she desired, she said, to love him more, to love him *perfectly*, and to be made perfectly like him. She was overheard praying, “Whatever fires I have to pass through, oh refine me, cleanse me wholly!”—and at another time, “Blessed Spirit, hold me: I cannot do without thee.” The prayer was heard. Her end was peace. Her last words were, “Cling to Christ, he is All in all.”

They who dwell under the shadow of the great Rock have good reason to believe the words of Augustine, “Thou hast made us for thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in thee.” The privilege both of their life and of their death cannot be better expressed than in the last words of John Wesley, uttered in holy triumph, “The best of all is, God is with us.” And with such a privilege the bright side of death, not its dark, should be the object of their habitual contemplation.

John Howe, when near that "invisible world" which he had taught others to regard as under the "dominion" of the Divine Redeemer, addressed those who entered his chamber like one who was already in it; so steadfast, so assured was his hope, so full of tranquil certainty. To him, as remarked by his biographer, the scenes he was about to visit could hardly be said to be in a "strange land." They had become familiar by the vivid exercise of faith. Like the Jewish legislator, he died on Mount Nebo, with the glittering scenes of the better country spread out beneath his feet. In the words of the great apostle of the Gentiles, he could say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

In nothing did this great man possess a stronger faith than in the bright side of death. He believed that the redeemed soul enters on conscious bliss in heaven when it leaves the body, though the consummation of its blessedness is reserved till it is re-united with the ransomed and raised body at the second coming of the Lord. "How strangely mistaken and disappointed," he argued, "had the apostle been, had his absence from the body set him further from Christ. But now," he says, speaking of the Christian's dying hour—and let the words cheer those who, whether in health or in sickness, shrink from the darkness of that hour—"now is the happy

season of the soul's awaking into the heavenly vital light of God; the blessed morning of that long-desired day is now dawned upon it; the cumbersome night-veil is laid aside, and the garments of salvation and immortal glory are now put on. It hath passed through the trouble and darkness of a wearisome night, and now is joy arrived with the morning." Glorious prospect—life's sorrow lost in heaven's joy!

" When this passing world is done,
When has sunk yon radiant sun,
When I stand with Christ on high,
Looking o'er life's history;
Then, Lord, shall I fully know—
Not till then—how much I owe.

" When I stand before the throne,
Dressed in beauty not my own;
When I see thee as thou art,
Love thee with unsinning heart;
Then, Lord, shall I fully know—
Not till then—how much I owe.

" When the praise of heaven I hear,
Loud as thunders to the ear,
Loud as many waters' noise,
Sweet as harp's melodious voice;
Then, Lord, shall I fully know—
Not till then—how much I owe.

" Oft I walk beneath the cloud,
Dark as midnight's gloomy shroud;
But when fear is at the height,
Jesus comes and all is light:
Blessed Jesus, bid me show
Doubting saints how much I owe.

" Now on earth, as through a glass,
Darkly let thy glory pass;
Make forgiveness feel so sweet,
Make thy Spirit's help so meet:
E'en on earth, Lord, make me know
Something of the debt I owe."

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