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DIVINE REALITIES;

OR,

SPIRITUAL REFLECTIONS

FOR THE

SAINT AND SINNER.

BY

OCTAVIUS WINSLOW, D.D.



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PREFACE.

SHADOWS and Realities constitute the great contrast between earth and heaven, time and eternity. “What shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue!” was an exclamation once uttered upon the floor of the British Senate by one of England’s most eloquent statesmen,* not less true than solemn and sublime. But the revelations of the Bible have come to displace these human, these earthly shadows, with divine and heavenly REALITIES. The Bible is true—eternity is real. “*We have not followed cunningly devised fables*” in yielding our unquestioning belief to the great and precious truths of the Gospel. Experience has proved them real, has demonstrated them divine. We have

* Burke.

tried the world, and it has wounded us—the creature, and it has disappointed us—the teaching of men, and it has bewildered us—our own hearts, and they have proved “*deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.*” We turn to the “*glorious Gospel of the blessed God,*” and we find it, through the anointing of the Holy Ghost, light in darkness, joy in sorrow, counsel in perplexity, strength in weakness, and hope in despair. It tells us of JESUS, the loving One, the mighty One, the sympathizing One, the faithful One, the saving One; and concentrating our whole soul in childlike faith upon Him, we prove the Gospel divine, God’s Word true—all it threatens, and all it promises, REAL.

The following pages will, we trust, in a humble way, lead the reader into a closer acquaintance with a few of these Divine Realities. With them many who take up this volume, may be already familiar. Those who have welcomed them before, as they have eagerly looked for a word of

counsel and comfort at the opening of a new year, may not regret to meet them again in another and more permanent form. To those to whom they will be new, this will explain the particular and appropriate bearing of each chapter upon this reflective and impressive period of time. But, believing that they contain instructive and saving, sanctifying and consolatory truths, suitable for the history of every-day life, and that they have already had the seal of the Divine blessing, the author commends them with confidence, in their enlarged form, to the prayerful perusal of the Christian Church, and to the continued favour of the TRIUNE GOD.

BATH, *September*, 1860.

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DIVINE REALITIES.

THE UNTRODDEN PATH.

"Ye have not passed this way heretofore."—*Josh.* iii. 4.

How solemn is the reflection that with a new cycle of time commences, with each traveller to Zion, a new and untrodden path. New events in his history will transpire—new scenes in the panorama of life will unfold—new phases of character will develop—new temptations will assail—new duties will devolve—new trials will be experienced—new sorrows will be felt—new friendships will be formed—and new mercies will be bestowed. How truly may it be said of the pilgrim, journeying through the wilderness to his eternal home, as he

stands upon the threshold of this untried period of his existence, pondering the unknown and uncertain future, "Ye have not passed this way heretofore."

But there is another thought inexpressibly soothing. Untried, untrodden, and unknown as that new path may be, it is each step mapped and arranged, and provided for in the everlasting and unchangeable covenant of God. To Him who leads us, who accepts us in the Son of his love, who knows the end from the beginning, it is no new, or uncertain, or hidden way. We thank Him that, whilst He wisely and kindly veils all the future from our ken, all that future—its minutest event—is as transparent and visible to Him as the past. Our Shepherd knows the windings along which He skilfully, gently, and safely leads his flock. He has travelled that way Himself, and has left the traces of His presence on the road; and as each follower advances—the new path unfolding at each step—he can exultingly exclaim, "I see the footprint

of my Lord: here went my Master, my Leader, my Captain, ‘leaving me an example that I should follow his steps.’” Oh! it is a thought replete with strong consolation, and well calculated to gird us for the coming year—the Lord knows and has ordained each step of the untrodden path upon which I am about to enter.

Another reflection. The infinite fore-thought, wisdom, and goodness which have marked each line of our new path have also *provided* for its every necessity. Each exigence in the history of the new year has been anticipated. Each want will bring its appropriate and adequate supply—each perplexity will have its guidance—each sorrow its comfort—each temptation its shield—each cloud its light. Each affliction will suggest its lesson—each correction will impart its teaching—each mercy will convey its message of love. The promise will be fulfilled to the letter—“*As thy day so shall thy strength be.*”

And how blessed to know that all the

provision for the untrodden path is *in Jesus*. “It pleased the Father that in Him should *all* fulness dwell.” All wisdom to guide, all power to uphold, all love to soothe, all grace to succour, all tenderness to sympathize, dwells in Christ. Let us, then, gird ourselves to a fresh taking hold of Christ. We must walk through this year not by sight, but by faith, and that faith must deal simply and directly with Jesus. “Without me ye can do nothing.” But with his strength made perfect in our weakness we can do all things. Oh be this our course and our posture—“coming up from the wilderness leaning on our Beloved.” Living in a world of imperfection and change, we must expect nothing perfect, nothing stable, in what we are, in what we do, or what we enjoy. But amidst the dissolving views of the world that “passeth away,” let us take firm hold of the unchangeableness of God. The wheels may revolve, but the axletree on which they turn is immoveable. Such is our covenant God. Events may vary—pro-

vidences may change—friends may die—feelings may fluctuate—but God in Christ will “know no variableness, neither the shadow of a turning.” “Having loved his own that were in the world, *He loved them unto the end.*” And will it not be blessed to receive each new event of our remaining history as directly under the government and appointment of God? “He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.” That new thing, be it what it may, which will transpire in your coming history, He will have created for your greatest good and his highest glory.

Reader! if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus, you will enter upon a new stage of your journey by a renewed surrender of yourself to the Lord. You will make the Cross the starting-point of a fresh setting out in the heavenly race. Oh commence this year with a renewed application to the “blood of sprinkling.” There is vitality in that blood; and its fresh sprinkling on your conscience will be as a new impartation

of spiritual life to your soul. Oh to begin the year with *a broken heart for sin* beneath the Cross of Immanuel! looking through that Cross to the heart of a loving, forgiving Father! Be not anxious about the future,—all that future God has provided for. “All my times are in thy hands.” “Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you.” “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.” Let it be a year of more spiritual *advance*. “Speak to the children of Israel that they *go forward*.” Forward in the path of duty—forward in the path of suffering—forward in the path of conflict—forward in the path of labour—and forward in the path to eternal rest and glory. Soon will that rest be reached and that glory appear. This new year may be the jubilant year of your soul—the year of your release. Oh spirit-stirring, ecstatic thought—this year I may be in heaven! this year I may be with Jesus, leaning my head upon his breast—my conflict, my sin, my sorrow all over!

this year all the glorious wonders of the upper world may burst upon my view, and I may mingle with apostles, and prophets, and martyrs—the “general assembly of the church of the first-born who are written in heaven.” What manner of persons, then, ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness? “Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.”

Reader! if you are not a believer in the Lord Jesus, Oh that your New Year’s Gift may be a new heart, a renewed mind, the second birth introducing you to a life for God. The Lord Jesus has solemnly, irrevocably affirmed, that unless you are born again of the Holy Spirit you shall not see the kingdom of God. Let not this new year be another year spent for *self*. Think of eternity—think of your solemn account—think of the coming of the Lord, and prepare to meet Him; “Awake, thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life.” Are you wondering if a wretch so vile as you may hope to be

saved? Do you feel the serpent's sting? Do you know the plague of your own heart? Then we have joyful news for you! Throw yourself for acceptance and eternal life upon the infinite merits of Jesus, and you shall be saved. No merit but his, no intercessor but Him, no mediator but Christ will avail you. All the saints and angels on earth and in heaven cannot give you peace here or glory hereafter. Go to God simply and entirely through Christ, breathing no name but the name of Jesus, and God, for Christ's alone sake, will accept, pardon, and save you. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

Dear reader, if Christ is in you, and you are in Christ, and these blessed truths are heartfelt truths in your experience, then may I not wish you joy of the New Year into which the good hand of the Lord has brought you? The year that is passed has brought you *nearer* home; the year that has commenced may bring you *to* that home. There may we, through the everlasting love

and sovereign grace of God, at last meet
and sing together, “ Worthy the Lamb that
was slain !”

Ah ! I shall soon be dying,
Time swiftly glides away ;
But on my Lord relying,
I hail the happy day ;

The day when I must enter
Upon a world unknown ;
My helpless soul I venture
On Jesus Christ alone.

He once, a spotless victim,
Upon Mount Calvary bled !
Jehovah did afflict Him,
And bruise Him in my stead.

Hence all my hope arises,
Unworthy as I am :
My soul most surely prizes
The sin-atoning Lamb.

To Him by grace united,
I joy in Him alone ;
And now, by faith, delighted
Behold Him on his throne.

Then with the saints in glory
The grateful song I'll raise,
And chant my blissful story
In high seraphic lays.

GOING HOME.

"Ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance which the Lord your God giveth you,"—*Deut.* xii. 9.

AND is it so, that at the close of this lone and weary pilgrimage there is rest above? and that after this earthly fleeting existence there is an inheritance reserved? May I unhesitatingly believe this assurance, and hopefully clasp it to my heart? Then with what a firm tread, and with what a buoyant spirit may I press my foot upon the mysterious threshold of the year now opening upon me—even as the morning's sun peers above the horizon, and as the early flower expands to the warm influence of its genial beams. Whether, like that sun, this new born year shall in its course be wreathed with storm-clouds—or whether, like that

opening floweret, its earthly loves and joys and hopes shall pale and droop and die, I cannot tell nor wish to know. Enough that God is my Father, my Sun, and Shield; that He will give grace and glory, and will withhold no good and needed thing. Enough that Christ is my Portion, my Advocate, my Friend, and that whatever else may pass away, his sympathy will not cease, his sufficiency will not fail, nor his love die. Enough that the everlasting covenant is mine, and that that covenant, made with me, is ordered in all things and sure. Enough that heaven is my rest, that towards it I am journeying, and that I am one year nearer its blessed and endless enjoyment.

Thus may each Christian pilgrim commune with his own heart while standing beneath the shadowy portal of another cycle of time. Ere yet we meet its new and sacred claims—its duties, its responsibilities, and its trials—it may be our wisdom to remember, that we are “not as yet

come to the rest and to the inheritance which the Lord our God giveth us." Our path, pointing homewards, lies across a long and dreary desert. We have, as yet, many a milestone to pass—many a stage to travel—many a foe to confront—many a battle to win. We cannot exult as those who put off the armour and wave the palm. And yet we are going home. Going home! what a soothing reflection! what an ecstatic prospect! The heart throbs quicker—the eye beams brighter—the spirit grows elastic—the whole soul uplifts its soaring pinion, eager for its flight, at the very thought of *heaven*. "I go to prepare a place for you," was one of the last and sweetest assurances that breathed from the lips of the departing Saviour; and though uttered eighteen hundred years ago, those words come stealing upon the memory like the echoes of by-gone music, thrilling the heart with holy and indescribable transport. Yes! He has passed within the veil as our forerunner; He has prepared heaven for us, and by His gentle,

wise, and loving discipline, He is preparing us for heaven.

Amidst the perpetually changing scenes of earth, it is refreshing to think of heaven as our *certain* hope. “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.” This is no quicksand basis for faith—no mirage of hope. Heaven is a promised “rest”—exquisitely expressive image!—and that promise is the word of Him who cannot lie. Nothing can surpass, nothing can compare with this! Human confidences—the strong and beautiful—have bent and broken beneath us. Hopes—bright and winning—we too fondly fed, have, like evening clouds of summer, faded away, draping the landscape they had painted with a thousand variegated hues, in the sombre pall of night. But heaven is true! God has promised it—Christ has secured it—the Holy Ghost is its earnest—and the joys we now feel are its pledges and “first-fruits.” Christian, consider this new epoch of time; unfold a

new page of your yet unwritten history with the full, unwavering conviction that God is faithful—that in all the negotiations, transactions, and events of the unknown future—in all the diversified and fluctuating phases of experience through which you may pass, it will be your mercy to do with Him of whom it is said, “It is impossible for God to lie.” Oh take this precious truth into your heart, and it will shed a warm sunlight over all the landscape of your yet shadowy existence. “He abideth faithful, He cannot deny Himself.” Receive the promise, and confide in the veracity of the Promiser, and He will make good to its utmost the word upon which He has caused you to hope. Standing yet within the solemn vestibule of this new and portentous year, could our fluttering hearts find repose in a more appropriate or sweeter truth than the Divine faithfulness of Him “with whom there is no variableness, neither the shadow of a turning?”

The Home to which we aspire, and for

which we pant, is not only a promised, it is also a *perfect* and *permanent* Home. The mixed character of those seasons we now call repose, and the shifting places and changing dwellings we here call home, should perpetually remind us that we are not, *as yet*, come to the perfect rest and the permanent home of heaven. Most true, indeed, God is the believer's present home, and Jesus his present rest. Beneath the shadow of the cross, by the side of the mercy-seat, within the pavilion of a Father's love there is true mental repose, a real heart's ease, a peace that passeth all understanding, found even here, where all things else are fleeting as a cloud, and unsubstantial as a dream. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." But it is to heaven we look for the soul's perfect and changeless happiness. With what imagery shall I portray it? How shall I describe it? Think of all the ills of your present condition—not one exists in heaven! Bereaved

one!—*death* enters not, slays not, sunders not there. Sick one!—*disease* pales not, enfeebles not, wastes not there. Afflicted one!—*sorrow* chafes not, saddens not, shades not there. Oppressed one!—*cruelty* injures not, wounds not, crushes not there. Forsaken one!—*inconstancy* disappoints not, chills not, mocks not there. Penitent one!—*sin* exists not, burdens not, embitters not there. Weeping one!—*tears* spring not, scald not, dim not there. “The former things are passed away.” There rests not upon that smooth brow, there lingers not upon those serene features a furrow, or line, or shade of former sadness, languor, or suffering—not a trace of wishes unfulfilled, of fond hopes blighted. The desert is passed, the ocean is crossed, the home is reached, and the soul finds itself in heaven, where all is the perfection of purity and the plenitude of bliss. Ages move on in endless succession, and still all is bright, new, and eternal. Oh, who would not live to win and enjoy a heaven so fair, so holy,

and so changeless as this? He who has Christ in his heart enshrines there the extinguishable, deathless hope of glory.

It is a richly instructive and deeply sanctifying thought—the *futurity* of the heavenly rest. When told that we are not *as yet* come to the rest and to the inheritance which the Lord our God giveth us, we are gently reminded that we have each one a niche in life to occupy, a sphere to fill, a mission to perform. The idea of personal responsibility, of individual influence, and of untiring action instantly starts up before the mind. “Not yet in heaven—then for what am I here? Surely it is for an object in harmony with my intellectual and spiritual being, and worthy of Him who still detains me on earth. It must be that I have something to do, or something to endure for Christ—an active or a passive part to fill. Lord, what wilt thou have me to do or suffer for Thee?” Oh there is a fathomless depth of Divine wisdom in the arrangement that keeps us so long out of

heaven. The world needs us, and we need the world. It needs us to illumine and sanctify it; we need it as the field of our conflict, and as the school of our graces. We want the world, not as a hermit's cell, but as a vast theatre where before angels and men our Christianity is developed in the achievements of prayer, in the triumphs of faith, in the labours of love, and in the endurance of suffering.

Not yet at home—then we would remember that it is “through much tribulation we are to enter the kingdom.” As a new period of time slowly rises from the depths of the unknown and mysterious future, its form, half-shadowy, half-brightness, seeming to say,

“Cold is my greeting: but when we part
Thou shalt find I have crept around thy heart.
Ah! vainly then would'st thou bid me stay,
And sigh to recall me when I am away.”

Shrink we from its stern and solemn duties, its bosomed sorrows, its deep and impenetrable decrees? Why shrink we?

Infinite resources unveil their treasures upon its threshold. Christ's atoning merits confront our vast demerit. Christ's boundless grace confronts our deep necessities. Christ's promised presence confronts our sad and gloomy loneliness. Jesus thus filled with grace so overflowing, with love so tender, with sympathy so exquisite, with power so illimitable, with resources so boundless, with a nature so changeless, stands before us and says to each trembling heart, "Fear not!" We commence a new march under His convoy. We prepare for a new conflict with His armour. We renew our pilgrimage with fresh supplies of "angels' food," affording nourishment for the present and pledges for the future. For that future, be not heedlessly, unbelievingly anxious. It is all in God's hands. He would that you should live each day upon Him as a little child—simple in your faith, unshaken in your confidence, clinging in your love. Let each morning's petition be—ever link-

ing it with the precious name of Jesus, that “name which is above every name”—“My Father! give me this day my daily bread.” Then, oh yes, then shall the promise be fulfilled, and its fulfilment shall be the immediate answer to your prayer—“As thy days, so shall thy strength be.”

Inspired by the prospect of going home, we shall be watchful that nothing hides it from our view, or hinders our growing meet-ness for its enjoyment. “Arise ye, and depart, this is not your rest,” is the yet impressive voice uttered by each drooping flower, and dying spring, and fading beam of earth-born good. Each moment we leave the desert behind us. We lose nothing, but we gain much; each night we pitch our tent “a day’s march nearer home.” The hope of the man whose portion is in this life is continually darkening and deteriorating. Each revolving year brings him nearer to the end and the loss of all his treasures. Unconverted reader, ponder this! But the hope of a believer in Jesus is rendered all

the more lively, more precious, and more bright as time approaches eternity. Growing more intense, it becomes more sanctifying. Like the highland stream, dashing from the rock, and purifying itself as it courses its way to the ocean, Christian hope purifies the heart in which it dwells. Gently disentwining its thoughts, affections, and desires from a too clinging attachment to terrestrial objects, it bears them onward to the sea of glory towards which it flows. Forward, then, with firmer tread, and with swifter wing to the hope laid up for us in heaven. Animated by such a hope, with a home before us so alluring and so near, shall we linger on our way to pluck the blighted flower, to admire the receding landscape, or even to build our tabernacle upon the mount all glowing with the Saviour's presence? We are leaving behind us all present scenes of sadness and of joy. An Arabian prince, on approaching the city of Damascus, was so overwhelmed by the splendour of the city, that he paused at its

entrance and said, “ I expect to enter one paradise ; but if I enter this city I shall be so caught by its blandishments, as to lose sight of the paradise in which I hope to enter.” He refused to advance, and erected at a short distance from it a monument, upon which he inscribed this remarkable sentiment. Journeying to a heaven infinitely surpassing a Mahomedan paradise—a heaven of perfect knowledge, of perfect holiness, of perfect love—shall we allow the dazzle of earthly blandishments to blind our eye to the glory so soon to be revealed ? “ Here we have no continuing city, we seek one to come.”

Not yet come to the heavenly rest, we still are approaching it, and oh, ecstatic thought ! we shall reach it at last. Everything in our present course reminds us that we are nearing home, as the seaweed washed from the rocks, and as the land-birds venturing from their bowers and floating by the vessel, are indices to the voyager that he is nearing his port. Are you bereaved ?—weep not ! earth has one tie less, and heaven

has one tie more. Are you impoverished of earthly substance?—grieve not! your imperishable treasure is in heaven. Are you sailing over dark and stormy waters?—fear not! the rising flood but lifts your ark the higher and nearer the mount of perfect safety and endless rest. Are you battling with disease, conscious that life is ebbing and eternity is nearing?—tremble not! there is light and music in your lone and shaded chamber—the dawn and the chimings of your heavenly home. “I am going home! Transporting thought!—true, I leave an earthly one, all so sweet and attractive, but I exchange it for a heavenly one infinitely brighter, more sacred and precious. I am going to Jesus—to the Church Triumphant—to Apostles, Prophets, and Martyrs—to the dear ones who line the shore on the other side, prepared to welcome me there. Death, from which I have so often recoiled, is but the triumphal arch—oh, how bright a risen Christ has made it!—through which I pass into ‘my Father’s house.’”

" I'm fading, slowly, slowly as the day
Fades into even and the quiet night;
But with the body's sinking and decay,
The spirit gathers new and holy light.
A brief, brief time, and I shall be at rest,
For ever sheltered on the Saviour's breast."

Let us, on this birth-day of the year, renew each his personal and solemn dedication to God; supplicating forgiveness for the past, and invoking grace to help in every time of need for the future. The atoning blood of Jesus! how solemn and how precious is it at this moment! Bathed in it afresh, we will more supremely, unreservedly, and submissively yield ourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead. It is only as we commence with the atoning blood that we commence aright. It is this that purifies the conscience, allays legal fears, dissolves the heart, imbitters sin, and gives a loftier elevation to motives, principles, and actions. Begin we, then, with the Cross. To it, poor and vile, worthless and faithless though we are, we are yet welcome. Oh! let us not carry the burden

of the Old Year's sins and backslidings failures and shortcomings, into the New. We will travel to the open fountain, wash, and be clean. Christ loves us to come as we are. We may approach all clothed with shame for the past, but not a reproving look will dart from His eye, nor an upbraiding word will breathe from His lips. The very fact of our coming penitent, humble, and trusting will, so to speak, wake every feeling of love in His heart, and move Him to the tenderest and most forgiving compassion. Nor shall abuse and ill-requited mercies past, seal our lips from supplicating blessings for the future. "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it," is still the Divine promise. And He who gave it has added a supplementary one, if possible, yet ampler and richer, "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not." For what, then, shall we supplicate of Him, who is thus prepared to bestow more than we are able to ask or think? Lord! hearken to my petition:—

I ask for a power to plead with men,
With a might like that of an angel's pen ;
To bid them turn to their only rest,
And in their blessing to make me blest !
The plaudits I want are a silent voice,
Which shall bid my inner soul rejoice !
I ask in my bosom a wealth to secure
That shall make the whole world's riches poor.
I ask for a Wisdom that brings to naught
The hoarded years of experience and thought.
I ask for a love which with rapture and light
Shall fill up my being's infinite ;
Which cannot change with a changing lot ;
Which endureth, and oh ! disappointeth not !—
Loveliest and brightest, when all earth can borrow
Is dark, and touched by the gloom of sorrow ;
Which soothes with unfailing sympathy
When all human founts of feeling are dry ;
Which wipeth a tear in secret shed ;
And cradleth the sick and weary head ;
True, where all else is but shadow and dream—
Perfect, immortal, celestial, supreme.

And now, beloved, let us arise and depart. “ Ye have dwelt long enough in this place.” “ Let us pass over unto the other side.” The cloud moves ! ’Tis the heavenly signal for our advance. A greater than Moses is our Leader ; a mightier than Joshua

is our Saviour. A fairer, sunnier, richer land than an earthly Canaan invites and woos us to its serene and peaceful coast. Trooping around and bending over us is a great cloud of witnesses, sister spirits, who seem to say, "Imitate our example, and yours will be our reward. Will you linger where we hastened? flee where we fought? fall where we stood? surrender where we conquered? Oh! be not slothful, but followers of us, who through faith and patience, are inheriting the promises." Blessed Saviour! thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory.

I'M GOING HOME.

A poor and aged Christian, who had passed upwards of seventy years on earth, seeing her friends weeping around her death-bed, exclaimed, "*Mourn not, I'm going home.*"

I'm going home—prepare the bridal wreath!

My Saviour bids my happy spirit come:

Damp not with tears the Christian's bed of death,
Rejoice!—I'm going home!

Earth has its cares; for threescore years and ten
 My lot has been 'midst thorny paths to roam;
 I would not track those desert scenes again;
 'Tis past—I'm going home!

The dove hath found her nest, the storm-tossed found
 A place of rest beyond the dashing foam
 Of grief's wild billows—thither am I bound.
 Joy, joy!—I'm going home.

Earth's flowers all fade—there fadless roses blow:
 Earth's sunniest light is shaded by the tomb;
 Earth's loves all slumber in the vault below—
 Death dwells not in that home.

I see the city of the blest on high,
 With the freed spirit's ken. I come! I come!
 Ye calling voices! catch my heart's reply;
 Home! home!—I'm going home.

RAGG.

OH! TO BE READY!

Oh! to be ready, when death shall come!
 Oh! to be ready to hasten home!
 No earthward clinging, no lingering gaze,
 No strife at parting, no sore amaze;
 No chains to sever that earth hath twined;
 No spell to loosen that love would bind;

No flitting shadows to dim the light
Of the angel pinions winged for flight;
No cloud-like phantom to fling a gloom
'Twixt heaven's bright portals and earth's dark tomb.
But sweetly, gently to pass away
From the world's dim twilight into day.

To list the music of angels' lyres;
To catch the rapture of seraph fires;
To lean in trust on the Risen One;
Till borne away to a fadeless throne.
Oh! to be ready, when death shall come!
Oh! to be ready to hasten home!

ANON.

MY TIMES IN GOD'S HAND.

"My times are in Thy hand."—*Psalm xxxi. 15.*

WHAT confirmation would the precious truth contained in these words derive from the personal experience of the man of God who penned them ! Reviewing the past of his eventful history, he would trace the guiding and overshadowing hand of his Heavenly Father in all the circumstances of the chequered and diversified scene ; and as memory thus recalled the strange and momentous events of his life, with what overpowering solemnity would the conviction force itself upon his mind, that for the form and complexion of that life how little was it indebted to himself ! Circumstances which chance could not originate, events which human sagacity could not foresee,

and results which finite experience could not determine, would at once lift his grateful and adoring thoughts to that God of infinite foreknowledge and love, whose overruling providence had guarded with a sleepless eye each circumstance, and whose infinite goodness had guided with a skilful hand each step. With this retrospect before him, with what intensity of feeling would the aged king exclaim, "MY TIMES ARE IN THY HAND."

But if David felt this truth—that all his interests were in God's keeping and under His supreme direction—so consolatory, as life drew near its close, how much more cheering may it be to us just entering upon a new year of human life, all whose history is, to our view, wisely and beneficently enshrouded in obscurity, and all whose events, from the least to the greatest, are happily beyond our control. "My times are in Thy hand." Who can give us the heartfelt, soothing influence of this precious truth, but the Holy Spirit, by

whose Divine inspiration it was uttered ? May He now unfold, and apply with his sanctifying, comforting power this portion of his own holy word to the reader's heart !

The declaration, that "our times are in the Lord's hand," implies, that the future of our history is impenetrably and mysteriously veiled from our sight. We live in a world of mysteries. They meet our eye, awaken our inquiry, and baffle our investigation at every step. Nature is a vast ar-
cana of mysteries. Science is a mystery—truth is a mystery—religion is a mystery—our existence is a mystery—the future of our being is a mystery. And God, who alone can explain all mysteries, is the greatest mystery of all. How little do we understand of the inexplicable wonders of a wonder-working God, "whose thoughts are a great deep," and "whose ways are past finding out." But to God nothing is mysterious. In purpose, nothing is unfixed ; in forethought, nothing is unknown ; in providence, nothing is contingent. His

glance pierces the future, as vividly as it beholds the past. "He knoweth the end from the beginning." All His doings are parts of a divine, eternal, and harmonious plan. He may make "darkness His secret place; His pavilion round about Him dark waters, and thick clouds of the skies," and to human vision His dispensations may appear gloomy, discrepant, and confused; yet is He "working all things after the counsel of His own will," and "at the brightness that is before Him, His thick clouds pass," and all is transparent and harmonious to His eye. And why this obscurity thus investing all our future? Would it not make for our present well-being—would it not be a satisfaction and a blessing, could we loop back the mystic veil, and gaze with a far-seeing and undimmed eye upon "our times," yet awaiting us this side the grave? Remembering the past, you are perhaps ready to say, "Could I but have foreseen, I would have fore-arranged. Had I anticipated the result of such a step, or have known the

issue of such a movement, or have safely calculated the consequences of such a measure, I might have pursued an opposite course, and have averted the evil I now deplore, and have spared me the misery I now feel.” But hush this vain reasoning! God, thy God, O believer, had in wisdom, faithfulness, and love, hidden all the future from thy view. “Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years.” How has He guided, counselled, and upheld you. He has led you by a *right* way. In perplexity, He has directed you—in want, He has supplied you—in sorrow, He has comforted you—in slippery paths, His mercy has held you up, and when fallen He has raised you again. From seeming evil He has educed positive good. The mistakes you have made, and the follies you have committed, in the blindness of your path, and in the sinfulness of your heart, have but led you to a closer acquaintance with, and to a stronger confidence in, God. They have opened up to

you new and more glorious views of His character and His government; while, in leading you closer to the feet of Jesus in self-knowledge and self-abhorrence, they have unlocked to you springs of spiritual blessings, fresh, sanctifying, and unspeakable. Beloved, God has placed us in a school in which He is teaching us to lay our blind reason at His feet, to cease from our own wisdom and guidance, and lean upon and confide in Him, as children with a parent. The goodness of God to us, combined with a jealous regard to His own glory, constrains Him to conceal the path along which He conducts us. His promise is, "*I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.*"—Isa. xlvi. 16. Could the scenes of this year's history rise in their shadowy outline before us—or were an angel permitted to divulge a single page in the mo-

mentous volume of events just opened, how might we shrink from the revelation, and closing the book again, calmly wait until He should unfold its leaves, "in whose hand our times are." How unfitted should we be to discharge our duties—to sustain our responsibilities—to meet our trials—cope with our difficulties, and bear our sorrows, were they all to confront us at this moment ! Oh, how kindly, wisely, and tenderly does our Father deal with us ! And in no part of His providential dealings is His goodness more clearly seen than in veiling all our future from our ken. Let us sit down at Jesus' feet, thanking Him that the "life which we now live in the flesh," we live not by *sight*, but by "the *faith* of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave Himself for us."

But our "times," all wrapt in impenetrable mystery, are yet in the Lord's hand. The words are emphatic. Our times are not in the hands of angels or of men, still less in our own—they are in the *Lord's* hand. It is an individual truth. "My

times." We deal too timidly with our individuality—with the truth of God as individuals—with Jesus as individuals—with the covenant of grace as individuals—with our responsibilities as individuals. "What," you exclaim, "I, a poor worm of the dust, not worthy of His regard, too insignificant for His notice—I, who have a heart so cold, a nature so depraved, a will so perverse—" *my times?*" Yes, dear reader, you may humbly adopt these words as your own, and exultingly exclaim, "*My* times are in His hand." How comprehensive, too, is this truth, "*My times* are in His hand." Diversified as they may be—whatever the shape in which they are developed, or the complexion which they assume—attractive or repulsive, bathed with light or draped in gloom—all are there, exclusively and safely lodged in the Lord's hand. Let us specify a few of these "times."

Our time of prosperity is in the Lord's hand. There are no circumstances of life in which we are more sadly prone to in-

dulge in self-complaisance than those of earthly prosperity. Industry is enriched and perseverance is rewarded, wealth increases and blessings accumulate, and the “heart grows fat, and kicks against God.” The merchant ship returns freighted with treasure—the acres of the tiller are fruitful, and his barns are filled with plenty; or prosperity in some other form smiles upon our path, and then, alas, God is forgotten. We arrogate to ourselves the praise of our success. “*My hand, and the might of my power hath gotten me this.*” But what is the language of God’s Word? “Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, * * lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses and dwelt therein; and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied, *then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God.*”—Deut. viii. 11, 14. But oh, let us remember all our past, and all our coming prosperity—if indeed He

shall so appoint it—is in the hand of God. It is His wisdom that suggests our plans—it is His power that guides, and it is His goodness that succeeds them. Every flower that blooms in our path, every smile that gladdens it, every mercy that bedews it, yea, “every good and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights.” Oh for grace to recognize God in our mercies, for a heart lifted up in holy returns of love, gratitude, and praise! How much sweeter will be our sweets, how much more blessed our blessings, and endeared our endearments, seeing them all dropping from the outstretched, munificent hand of a loving, gracious, and bountiful Father.

But there are *times of adversity*, and they, too, are in the Lord's hand. As every sunbeam that brightens, so every cloud that darkens, comes from God. We are subject to great and sudden reverses in our earthly condition. Joy is often succeeded by grief, prosperity by adversity. We are on the

pinnacle to-day—to-morrow at its base. Oh what a change may one event, and in one moment, create! A storm—a conflagration—a slight oscillation of the funds—the morning's post—the casual meeting of a friend, may clothe our life in mourning. But, beloved, all is from the Lord. "Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground."—Job v. 6. Sorrow cannot come until God bids it. Health cannot fade—wealth cannot vanish—comfort cannot decay—friendship cannot chill—loved ones cannot die until He, in His sovereignty permits. Your time of sorrow is His appointment. The bitter cup which it may please the Lord you shall drink this year, will not be mixed by human hands. In the hand of the Lord is that cup. The cloud that may lower on your path, will not gather at a creature's bidding. "He maketh the cloud His chariot." Some treasure you are now pressing to your heart, He may ask you to resign—some blessing you now possess, He may bid you relinquish

—some fond expectation you now cherish, He may will you should forego—some lonely path He may design you should tread—yea, He may even bereave you of all, and yet all, *all* is in His hand. His hand—a Father's hand—moving in the thick darkness, is shaping every event, and arranging every dispensation of your life. Has sickness laid you on a bed of suffering? has bereavement darkened your home? has adversity impoverished your resources? has change lessened your comforts? has sorrow in one of its many forms crushed your spirit to the earth? *The Lord has done it!* In all that has been sent, in all that has been recalled, and in all that has been withheld, His hand, noiseless and unseen, has moved. Ah! yes! that hand of changeless love blends a sweet with every bitter, pencils a bright bow on each dark cloud—upholds each faltering step—shelters within its hollow, and guides with unerring skill His chosen people safe to eternal glory. Dear child of God, your afflictions, your trials, your crosses, your

losses, your sorrows, all, *all* are in your heavenly Father's hand, and they cannot come until sent by Him. Bow that stricken heart, yield that tempest-tossed soul to His sovereign disposal, to His calm, righteous sway, in the submissive spirit and language of your suffering Saviour, “‘Thy will, O my Father, not mine, be done !’ My times of sadness and of grief are in Thy hand.”

Times of soul-distress, spiritual darkness, and conflict are in His hand. Many such are there in the experience of the true saints of God. Many the hard-fought battle, the fiery dart, the desperate wound, the momentary defeat in the Christian's life. Taking advantage of the spiritual mist which may hover around the mind in the time of perplexing care, and of gloomy providences, the foe, with stealthy tread, may rush in upon the soul like a flood. And when to this surprisal is added the suspension of the Lord's manifested presence, the veiling of His smile, the silence of His responsive voice, oh *that* is a time of soul-distress indeed!

But it is in the Lord's hand. No spiritual cloud shades, no mental distress depresses, no fiery dart is launched, that is not by Him permitted, and for which there is not a provision by Him arranged. There is nothing which the Lord has taken more entirely and exclusively into His keeping than the redeemed, sanctified *souls* of His people. All their interests for eternity are exclusively in His hand. In the infinite fulness of Jesus, in the inexhaustible supply of the covenant, in the exceeding great and precious promises of His word, He has anticipated every spiritual exigence of the believer. How precious is thy soul to Him who bore all its sins, who exhausted all its curse, who travailed for it in ignominy and suffering, and who ransomed it with His own most precious blood. Guarded, too, by His indwelling Spirit is His kingdom of righteousness, joy, and peace within you. Oh endeavour to realize that, whatever be your mental exercises, spiritual conflicts, doubts and fears, your "times" of soul despondency

are in the Lord's hand. Lodged there, safe are your spiritual interests. "All His saints are in His hand." And He to whose care you have confided your redeemed soul, has pledged Himself for its eternal security. Of His own sheep He says, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all: and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." With like precious faith and humble assurance you are privileged to exclaim with Paul, "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." Ah! as soon shall Christ Himself perish as one bought with His blood. No member of His body, insignificant though it may be, shall be dissevered. No temple of the Holy Ghost, frail and imperfect though it is, shall be destroyed. Not a soul to whom the divine image has been restored, and the divine nature has been

imparted, upon whose heart the name of Jesus has been carved, shall be involved in the final and eternal destruction of the wicked. Nothing shall perish but the earthly and the sensual. Not one grain of precious faith shall be lost—not one spark of divine light shall be extinguished—not one pulsation of spiritual life shall die. Oh think of this, you who have fled all sinful and trembling to Jesus—you who cling to Him, as the limpet to the rock, as the ivy to the oak, never shall you lose that hold of faith you have on Christ, and never will Christ lose that hold of love He has on you. You and Jesus are one, indivisibly and eternally *one*. Nothing shall separate you from His love, nor sever you from His care, nor exclude you from His sympathy, nor banish you from His heaven of eternal blessedness. You are in Christ, the subject of His *grace*; and Christ is in you, the hope of *glory*.” All your cares are Christ’s care—all your sorrows are Christ’s sorrow—all your need is Christ’s supply—all your sick-

nesses are Christ's cure—all your crosses are Christ's burden. Your life, temporal, spiritual, eternal, is "hid with Christ in God." Oh the unutterable blessings that spring from a vital union with the Lord Jesus! The believer can exultingly say, "Christ and I are one! One in nature—one in affection—one in sympathy—one in fellowship, and one through the countless ages of eternity. The life I live is a life of faith in Him. I fly to Him in the confidence of a loving friend, in the simplicity of a little child, and I reveal to Him my secret sorrow. I confess to Him my hidden sin. I acknowledge my heart-backsliding. I make known to Him my wants, my sufferings, my fears. I tell Him how chilled is my affection, how reserved is my obedience, how imperfect is my service, and yet how I long to love Him more ardently, to follow Him more closely, to serve Him more devotedly, to be more wholly and holily His. And how does He meet me? With a hearkening ear—with a beaming eye—with

a gracious word—with an out-stretched hand—with a benignity and a gentleness *all like Himself.*" Confide, then, dear reader, your spiritual and deathless interests in the Lord's hand. Careful only to "work out" in a holy life the grace He has wrought in your soul—thus manifestly a "living epistle of Christ, known and read of all men."

To those who, depressed with a painful foreboding at their final dissolution, are all their lifetime subject to bondage, how consolatory is the reflection that *the time of the believer's death* is peculiarly in the Lord's hand. It is solemnly true that there is a "*time to die.*" Ah! affecting thought—"a *time to die!*" A time when this mortal conflict will be over—when this heart will cease to feel, alike insensible to joy or sorrow—when this head will ache and these eyes will weep no more—best and holiest of all—a time "when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality," and we shall "see

Christ as He is, and be like Him." The world we have left will move on then as now: life's lights and shadows will gather in blended hues around our grave; but wrapt in death's deep, dreamless sleep, we shall be unconscious of all that once distressed or charmed us—the frown of anger, and the smile of love—"for ever with the Lord." If this be so, then, O Christian, why this anxious, trembling fear? Your time of death, with all its attendant circumstances, is in the Lord's hand. All is appointed and arranged by Him who loves you and who redeemed you—infinite goodness, wisdom and faithfulness consulting your highest happiness in each circumstance of your departure. The final sickness cannot come, the "last enemy" cannot strike until He bids it. All is in His hand; then calmly, confidently leave life's closing scene with Him. You cannot die away from Jesus. Whether your spirit wings its flight at home or abroad, amidst strangers or friends, by a lingering process, or by a

sudden stroke, in brightness or in gloom, Jesus will be with you ; and, upheld by His grace and cheered with His presence, you shall triumphantly exclaim, " Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will do no evil ; for Thou art with me ; thy road and thy staff they comfort me," bearing your dying testimony to the faithfulness of God and the preciousness of His promises. My *time to die* is in thy hand, O Lord, and there I calmly leave it.

There is a peculiar emphasis in a truth contained in the beautiful words upon which we have been commenting worthy of a more particular notice. In *whose* hand are the believer's times ? In a *Father's* hand. Be those times what they may—times of trial—times of temptation—times of suffering—times of peril—times of sunshine or of gloom—of life or death—they are in a Parent's hand. Is your present path lone and dreary ? Has the Lord seen fit to recall some fond blessing, to deny some earnest request, or painfully to discipline

your heart? All this springs from a *Father's* love as fully as though He had unlocked His treasury, and poured its costliest gifts at your feet. Can you enter upon the unknown history of this year—troubles, it may be, looming in the shadowy distance, uncertainty hanging over your future path, not able to forecast a single probability of what may be your future lot—with a firmer, sweeter truth for faith to lean upon than this?—"My times are in a *Father's* hand, and all will, all must be well." In a *Redeemer's* hand, too, are our times. That same *Redeemer* who carried our sorrows in His heart, our curse and transgressions on His soul, our cross on His shoulder, who died, who rose again, and who lives and intercedes for us, and who will gather all His ransomed around Him in glory, is your guardian and your guide. Can you not cheerfully confide all your earthly concerns, all your spiritual interests to His keeping and control?—casting *all* your care upon Him who careth for you?"

"Oh yes!" faith replies, "in that hand that still bears in its palm the print of the nail, are all my times; and I will trust and not be afraid."

Unconverted reader—do you ask, "In whose hand are my times?" I answer, in that Infinite Sovereign's, "in whose hand thy life is, and whose are all thy ways." I confront you, standing upon the threshold of the new year, with this solemn truth—Your times are in God's hand. "In Him you live, and move, and have your being." You cannot be independent of God for a single breath, a single thought or a single step. From His government you cannot break, from His eye you cannot hide, from His power you cannot flee. He holds you responsible for all your endowments, acquirements, and doings, and ere long will say to you, "Give an account of thy stewardship." Oh that this may be a year of new life to your soul—of living to the Lord. A *new* year it then, indeed, will be in your history, such as you have never lived be-

fore. Oh that this year your stubborn will, after so long a resistance—your rebellious heart, after its years of closing and hardening against a beseeching, pleading Saviour, may be sweetly constrained to bow to the despised gospel of Christ—born of the Spirit a child of God, an heir of happiness which the revolution of time and the ages of eternity shall never terminate. Ah ! of how many who read these pages may the decree have already gone forth, "*Thus saith the Lord, This year thou shalt die!*" Oh dismal sentence to those who have no union with the Lord Jesus ! Dear reader, are you preparing and resolving to spend this year as all the previous years of your life have been spent ? What ! in hating God, in abusing His mercies, in despising His Son, in neglecting His salvation, in hardening your heart in sin, in living for the world and to yourself, and in treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath ? Is such a life worthy of your being ? Can you bend the knee upon the confines of this

year and pray—"Great Author of my being! Father of all my mercies! Thou righteous Judge of the world! grant me another year of rebellion and impiety; more time to waste; more mercies to abuse; more means of grace to neglect; more property to squander; more influence to oppose and fight against Thee?" You shudder at the thought! You could not, for your life, breathe such a prayer. And yet, entering upon this year in an unconverted state, are not your thoughts, temper, and resolves—always far more expressive than words—insulting God with the *spirit* of a petition the language of which you dare not utter. Oh that, gently, persuasively drawn by the Holy Spirit, you may now betake yourself to the Lord Jesus as a self-destroyed yet humble, repentant sinner. Oh that this may be the happy hour of your spiritual espousals—of your covenant, unreserved surrender to the Lord to be His child, His servant for ever. True happiness, joy, and peace will ever be strangers to your heart

until it tastes the love of the Saviour. Nor will you be able to give yourself to the high and noble duties of real life, or to contemplate death with calmness, and the eternity that stretches beyond it with hope, until you are reconciled to God, through the “one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.” In pressing these thoughts upon your attention, with equal earnestness and affection would I exhort you to come to Christ without demurring at your sinfulness, or hesitating on the ground of having no fitness or worthiness to plead. Jesus saves none but *sinners*. Approach with a price in your hand with which to *purchase* your salvation, and you will be indignantly *rejected*! But approach the life-giving waters “without money and without price,” and receive salvation as a *free gift*, and you will be cordially *received*! The atoning work is finished, the great salvation is purchased, the mighty debt is paid—all perfected and secured by the blood of God’s incarnate Son. And now it is His good plea-

sure and delight to confer this priceless, precious boon upon every one who is of a "contrite and humble spirit," as an act of most free favour, however vile, undeserving, and poor the recipient might be. "*By grace are ye saved.*" "*Therefore it is of faith that it might be by grace.*" Before the majesty and splendour of this precious truth all human glory must fade, all human pride must fall. Were a crown to encircle your brow—or had you lived the life of the most rigid moralist—or were you possessed of all the spoils of ancient and modern lore—yet, if saved, you must be saved as was the humble publican, approaching in his spirit and breathing his petition, "*God be merciful to me a sinner.*" That proud, rebellious, self-righteous *heart* of thine must be laid low in the dust. Oh descend from the Babel of your own work, from the towering summit of which you have profanely hoped to build your way into heaven,—tear from off you the fig-leaf righteousness with the covering of which you have vainly sought

to veil the moral deformity of your soul, and come and base your hope of heaven upon the “only name given under heaven whereby a sinner might be saved,” and enfold yourself believably in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be accepted. “Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” It is written, “By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight.” And by the same inspiration it is also written, “But to him that *worketh not*, but *believeth* in Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” And then, from this act of most free justification follows this precious, holy result, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have *peace with God* through our Lord Jesus Christ.”—Rom. v. 1. Oh, then, by all the deathless interests that are at stake, by the desire for a holy life, a happy death, and a glorious immortality, cease from yourself; relinquish all reliance upon sacraments, religious duties, and charitable

works, and under a spiritual, deep conviction of the desperate sinfulness of your fallen and corrupt nature, the “plague of your own heart,” your condemnation by the law, your entire inability to save yourself and your utter unpreparedness to stand before the holy Lord God, flee to Christ, and avail yourself of the great salvation which He has effectually wrought and most freely bestows. And what will be your reception by the Saviour? Does it admit of a doubt? Oh no! not one. He came into the world to save sinners—and He will save you. His compassion *inclines* Him to save sinners—His power *enables* Him to save sinners—His promise *binds* Him to save sinners. “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” And oh how easy it is to be saved when the Holy Spirit draws the heart to Christ! It is not great faith, nor deep experience, nor extensive knowledge that are required. The dimmest eye that ever looked to Christ—the feeblest

hand that ever took hold of Christ—the most trembling step that ever travelled to Christ, has in it present salvation—has in it life eternal. The smallest measure of real faith will take the soul to heaven. Yes! there is hope for the trembling penitent. Jesus *suffered* to the uttermost, therefore He is able to “*save* to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him.”

Let us, in conclusion, trace the practical influence which this truth should exert upon our minds. The present aspect of our “times,” as a nation, is gloomy and depressive to a degree. It is “A TIME OF WAR!” The scourge which our hearts fondly hoped would be stayed, and which a patient diplomacy strenuously strove to avert, has fallen upon us with more than expected terror and destruction. The nation is clad in mourning. Scarcely is there a family, from the highest to the lowest, that has not felt some vibration of the terrible shock. “Abroad the sword bereaveth, at home there is as death.” Who can paint the

anguish or describe the desolateness at the present moment of many an English home—whose brave husband, father, brother, lover, friend, reposes, all lone and gory, on Alma's bleak heights, or in Inkerman's low vale? Bereaved ones! God is LOVE. With what more consoling truth can we meet your case? There is kindness in God—there is sympathy in Jesus—there is consolation in the Bible—there is soothing in prayer—there is the hope of a reunion in a holier and brighter world with all those who have died in the Lord. Such a hope may you not cherish? The tear of penitence—the cry for pardon—the look of faith—the appeal to mercy from the battle-field while life was fast ebbing, was it in vain? Infinite power! Divine compassion! Sovereign grace! forbid the thought! He who met the last look, and caught the last sigh, and heard the last prayer of the dying malefactor and saved him, as life passed away, was near the expiring warrior—and who will dare say that He who can save at the “eleventh hour,”

and the chief of sinners, heard not that cry for help, answered not that prayer for mercy? In *one moment* the Spirit of God can breathe divine life into the soul, and fit it for heaven. He who said, "Let there be light," and light was, can by a word say, "I am thy salvation," and the expiring sinner is instantly and eternally saved. But we turn to you who are thus suddenly and deeply bereaved. Your present time of calamity is in the Lord's hand. He has made you a widow that He might be your God—a fatherless one that in Him you might find mercy. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" "I wound and I heal." Oh that this the time of your deep, inconsolable grief may be the time of prayer, of seeking unto Him who hath smitten and who alone bindeth up. "Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace;" and then, in deep unmurmuring submission to the Divine disposal, you will exclaim, "The cup which my Father hath given me shall I not drink it? He hath done all things well."

Let this precious truth, "My times are in thy hand," divest your mind of all needless, anxious care for the present or the future. Exercising simple faith in God, "be careful for nothing." "Be content with such things as ye have, for He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Learn to be content with your present lot, with God's dealings with, and His disposal of, you. You are just where His providence has, in its inscrutable, but all-wise and righteous decision, placed you. It may be a position painful, irksome, trying, but it is right. Oh yes! it is *right!* Only aim to glorify Him in it. Wherever you are placed, God has a work for you to do, a purpose through you to be accomplished, in which He blends your happiness with His glory. And when you have learnt the lessons of His love, He will transfer you to another and a wider sphere, for whose nobler duties and higher responsibilities the present is, perhaps, but disciplining and preparing you.

Covet, then, to live a life of daily de-

pendence upon God. Oh it is a sweet and holy life ! It saves from many a desponding feeling, from many a corroding care, from many an anxious thought, from many a sleepless night, from many a tearful eye, and from many an imprudent and sinful scheme. Repairing to the “covenant ordered in all things and sure,” you may confide children, friends, calling, yourself, to the Lord’s care, in the fullest assurance that all their “times” and yours are in His hand. In a letter addressed by Luther to Melanchthon, at Augsburg, there occur these striking remarks, which from their appositeness to the present subject, I venture to interweave with my own, “Grace and peace in Christ ! in Christ I say, and not in the world, amen. I hate, with exceeding hatred, those extreme cares which consume you. If the cause is unjust, abandon it ; if the cause is just, why should we belie the promises of Him who commands us to sleep without fear ? Can the devil do more than kill us ? Christ will not be wanting to the

work of justice and of truth. He lives ! He reigns ! What fear, then, can we have ? God is powerful to upraise His cause, if it is overthrown ; to make it proceed, if it remains motionless ; and if we are not worthy of it, He will do it by others. For our cause is in the very hands of Him who can say, ‘No one shall pluck it out of my hands.’ I would not have it in our hands, and it would not be desirable that it were so. I have had many things in my hands, and I have lost them all ; but whatever I have been able to place in God’s, I still possess.”*

Oh yes ! beloved reader, thank God that your times, your interests, your salvation, are all out of your hands, and out of the hands of all creatures, supremely and safely in His. Forward in the path of duty, of labour, and of suffering. Aim to resemble Christ more closely in your disposition, your spirit, your whole life. ‘Soon will it be said, “The Master is come, and calleth for thee.” *He is coming.* “Prepare to meet thy God.”’

* D’Aubigny’s Reformation.

Let your motto for this year be—FORWARD! Patient in endurance—submissive in suffering—content with God's allotment—zealous, prayerful, and watchful, be you found “standing in your lot at the end of the days.” Trust God implicitly for the future. No sorrow cometh but shall open some sweet spring of comfort—no necessity transpireth but shall endear a Father's care—no affliction befalleth but shall be attended with the Saviour's tenderest sympathy. In Him meets all confluence of grace for your hourly, momentary need. Let your constant *prayer* be—“Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.” Let your daily *precept* be—“Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you.” And then leave God to fulfil, as most faithfully He will, “His own gracious, precious *promise*”—“AS THY DAYS, SO SHALL THY STRENGTH BE.” Thus walking with God through this vale of tears, until you exchange sorrow for joy, suffering for ease, sin for purity, labour for rest, conflict for victory, and all earth's chequered, gloomy

scenes, for the changeless, cloudless happiness and glory of heaven.

“ Go to, then ! Henceforth it shall no longer vex me,
Because as I wish the world goes not alway ;
The turmoils of life shall no longer perplex me,
Nor my heart be worn out with grief of to-day.

Woe is Time’s blight ;
The seed of delight
Shall spring up and bloom in heaven’s islands of light.

“ Then pain shall inherit a rich over-payment ;
Then tears shall be wiped from all-sorrowing eyes ;
The poor be clothed then in the fairest of raiment,
And the sick with the vigour of health shall arise ;
Hatred shall cease ;
All shall be peace ;
For in heaven alone doth good ever increase.

“ Oh let, then, my lot and my life be appointed,
Just as my God and my Lord seeth meet ;
Hopes laid in heaven are ne’er disappointed,
Let the world have its way till the end is complete ;
Time’s tree will cast
Its leaves on the blast,
And heaven make everything right at the last.”*

* Translated from Thomas Kingo, a Dane, born 1634 ;
by Mary Howitt.

THE BOSOM OF THE FATHER; OR, THE UNVEILED LOVE OF GOD.

"The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father."—*John i. 18.*

IN what a critical and impressive position does a new era of time place us! Such must be the feeling and such the reflection of every serious mind, realizing, in any degree, how solemn and precious a thing is LIFE! The opening year plants us midway between the past and the future, standing as upon a narrow isthmus, its shores washed by the waves of two eternities. The *past* of time a history—real, palpable, irrevocable, its records and its recollections all treasured up in the archives of another world, to be produced, scrutinized, and adjudged in that great day, when *the books*

will be opened, and the dead shall be judged out of those things which were written in the book, according to their works. The future of time, a conjecture—impalpable, shadowy, formless, its dim perspective slowly and silently rising before the mind, all draped with the deep shadows of an inscrutable unknown. Shuddering as we stretch our aching vision into the future—its duties and trials, its changes and perils, its promises and hopes—for life is a perspective of sunshine and shade—all looming in the mist that shrouds them, the mind recoils from the contemplation. Verily, it is a thoughtful and serious position, this, in which we stand. And yet the child of God, believing, confiding, hoping, is tranquil and serene. With the scene before him, he is awe-struck, but not appalled; he is solemn, but not dismayed. With an intelligent survey, and a vivid perception of the responsibilities involved, of the duties imposed, of the trials imbosomed, of the dangers concealed in this new-born epoch

of time; and with, perhaps, a nervous and pensive anticipation of its yet unwritten history, he still is conscious of a feeling of trust and repose, of calmness and serenity, to which all others are strangers, unsustained by a "*like precious faith*" with him. And whence this heaven-like placidity, this undisturbed feeling of confidence now stealing so gently and so soothingly across the spirit bending over the dreary confine, and peering into the shrouded events of the misty future? Oh it is the assurance—the Divine, firm, unwavering assurance—that whatever that future may be—bright or shady, joyous or sad, sickness or health, life or death, earth or heaven—*he dwells in the bosom of the Father*. Could we confront our undeveloped history with a truth more spiritual, appropriate, and precious than this? It presents to us that great God, with whom in life's minutest incidents we have to do, clothed in a character the most lovely and winning; while it defines our relation to Him as the most close and tender.

Let our trembling faith but firmly grasp it; let our fluttering hearts but quietly repose in it; let our whole soul be absorbed in it; and every gloomy thought and anxious forecasting of the future will disappear as morning's gray mists dissolve into a landscape of pencilled loveliness and glowing light.

The first view of this interesting subject is that which presents to us *the heart of God unveiled*: in other words, the manifested love of God to His people. Previous to the fall, no veil intercepted from the human soul the heart of God. The sun of His affection, unshaded by a vapour, shone forth in all its infinite yet not overpowering effulgence, since man's vision was yet unimpaired by sin, and undimmed by sorrow. Every recess in the Father's bosom was thrown open, every thought known, and every throb felt; whilst between the Creator and the creature there existed the most perfect harmony, confidence, and communion. He lived as none other did, in the very heart of God, as though he were its sole possessor

and its lone occupant. But when, by a voluntary relinquishment, he forsook that sacred home, tore himself from that loving heart, a dark cloud, an impervious veil, intercepted it from his view ; and no longer calm and happy in the assurance of his Father's love, from that moment God became to him an object of vague conception, of distorted feature, of guilty terror, and of dark distrust. A fugitive from the bosom that had nursed and cherished him in the days of his innocence ; haunted by the misgivings of a guilty nature ; shunning, terror-stricken, the glorious Being with whom he had been wont so confidingly and so sweetly to converse, he sought distance and concealment from the God that had loved him, amidst the deep-shaded bowers of Eden. Ever since that fatal and entire severance from God, the atheistic language of man's revolted and alienated heart has been, "Depart from us ; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways."

The heart of God thus veiled, who could

unveil it? The love of God thus forfeited, who could restore it? The character of God thus shrouded in mystery, profound and impenetrable, who could portray it? If the Deity once more appeared in a manifested and benignant form to beings conscious of deserved wrath, and trembling with guilty fear, it must be by the Deity revealing itself. To scale the height of the ascent that would once more bring us in view of the still loving and unchanged heart of God, were an achievement impossible to man. To cross the barrier which separated the Eternal One from the fallen creature; to search out the viewless God-head, divine the secret, unravel the thoughts, and fathom the purposes brooding in the bosom of the Infinite Father—were beyond the utmost stretch of finite power, that power all bedwarfed and paralyzed by sin. Nothing, then, is more clear, than that the Deity must descend to man, in the utter incapability of man's ascending to the Deity. As God only knows His own love, that love,

once alienated and lost, can only be rewon and revealed by a power in which the Godhead should appear, achieving the wonder and securing the praise. Now all this has been accomplished. God has come down to man in the form and appearance of man—the Deity *visible* to human eyes. “*The only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.*” In his incarnate form man sees “*the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of His person.*” Enshrined in humanity, he has stepped forth upon the platform of our world—the visible image of the invisible God—the authentic representation of Deity—“*God manifest in the flesh.*” Stupendous verity! Man can now look upon God and live. He can now gaze into the heart of God, repose, and not be afraid. All our terror and distrust is gone. All our vague, shadowy, and distorted conceptions are vanished. We descry the character, and read the heart, and behold the glory of God in the sinless humanity and

atoning work of His beloved son. The Father stands before us all declared. In the tears of sympathy which Jesus shed,—in the accents of tenderness which He breathed —in the lessons of wisdom which He taught,—in the strains of deep pathos with which even His rebukes and remonstrances were clothed—in the affluence with which He supplied every want—in the promptness with which He stifled every woe—in a word, in the profuseness with which He lavished His blessings on man in all the diversified forms of suffering and want—we see the bosom of the Father all unveiled. It was the heart of God throbbing in responsive benevolence to the quiverings of our soul; it was the love of the Father manifested, and flowing through the incarnate and crucified Son.

“*God is love,*” was thus the great truth Jesus came to make known. Hence God’s love is clearly a *revelation* to man, rather than a *discovery* by man. Divine love was the last perfection of Deity to baffle the research of human wisdom. Other attributes

might be dimly traced in creation. Some faint glimmerings of God's wisdom, power, and goodness might be seen in the "*things which are made*;" but how God could love sinners, could redeem and save sinners, was a question to which nature's oracle returned no response. In the exercise of the vast powers with which his Creator has endowed him, man may discover everything but this. He sweeps the firmament above him with his glass, and a new pleiad of surpassing glory starts before his view. He delves into the earth beneath him, and an ancient and long-lost city is untombed. He works a problem, and science develops some new and startling wonder. But there is *one* discovery he cannot make—one wonder surpassing all wonders, the most marvellous and stupendous—he cannot unravel. Nature, aiding him in all other researches, affords him no clue to this. The sunbeam paints it not upon the brilliant cloud; the glacier reflects it not from its dazzling brow; the valley's stream murmurs it not

in its gentle music; it thunders not in the roar of ocean's billow; it sighs not in the evening's zephyr; it exhales not in the opening flower; all nature is profoundly silent upon a theme so Divine and strange, so vast and tender, as God's redeeming love to man. But the Son, leaving the bosom of the Father, in which from eternity He had reposed, and which, in the "fulness of time," He relinquished, has descended to our world to correct our apprehensions and to dislodge our doubts, to calm our fears and to reassure our hopes with the certainty of the wondrous fact that God is still mindful of man, and taketh delight in man; that no revolt nor alienation, no enmity nor ingratitude has turned away His heart from man; that He loves him still, and that loving, He "*so loved him that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*" Thus did He come, His Father's representative, to declare Him to man. And as He wrought His brilliant miracles of stupendous power,

—thus attesting the fact of His Godhead ; and as He pronounced His discourses of infinite wisdom—thus unlocking the treasures of His grace ; and as He travelled all laden with our sins to the cross—thus unsealing the fountain of His compassion, He could say to all who challenged the Divinity of His mission, or who asked, at His hands, a vision of the Father, “*He that hath seen Me HATH SEEN THE FATHER.*”—“*I and my Father are One.*” Behold the mission of the Saviour to our world ! He has come to uplift the veil, and reveal the heart of God —that heart, all throbbing with a love as infinite as His nature, as deathless as His being. He came not to *inspire* but to *reveal* the love of God. The atonement did not originate, it expounded the Father’s love—the love was already there. Sin had but beclouded its existence ; rebellion had but arrested its flow. Struggling and panting for a full, unrestrained expression, it could find no adequate outlet, no appropriate channel in its course to man, save in the

surrender and sacrifice of its most costly and precious treasure. The Son of the Father must bleed and die ere the love of the Father could embrace its object. And now, O child of God, the veil is withdrawn, the thick cloud is blotted out, and your God stands before you all arrayed in ineffable love, His heart your divine pavilion, His bosom your sacred home. “*The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.*”

And whose heart is it thus unveiled? It is a *Father's* heart. “*I go to my Father and to your Father.*” Contemplate the child's place, it is “*the bosom of the Father.*” “*In Thee the fatherless findeth mercy.*” Does an orphan's moistened eye drop a tear upon this page? Let him clasp these words to his sad heart, and no more feel that he is desolate and alone in the world, with no heart to love, no bosom to sympathize, no friends to cheer, no hand to help him. God is your Father, the orphan's Father and Friend. Confide but in His wisdom to

guide you ; repose but in His love to soothe you ; trust but in His power to protect and in His willingness to befriend you, and His mercy shall be your solace and your shield until life's latest hour. The heart of God, then, is a parent's heart ; and what child would refuse to repose in a parent's bosom ? Where will he look for affection, for sympathy, for confidence, for an asylum, if not in the bosom of his father ? This place, and this privilege, child of God, is *yours..* “ *For ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.* ”

Such is the distinction, and such the peculiar privilege of the child of God—realizing in all circumstances that, in virtue of his union with the Lord Jesus, and of his adoption by grace into God's family, his perpetual dwelling-place is “ the bosom of the Father ! ” To some of the Lord's people this may appear a truth strange and startling. “ The Father's bosom ; it is too sacred, too lofty, too privileged a place for one so sinful and wayward, so fickle and

unworthy as I am." But listen to the argument that meets and removes your objection. Let me ask, where does the Head of the Church repose? You reply, "In the bosom of the Father." Then, where the Head dwells there also must dwell the body. And, where the body reposes, there must also repose the members of the body. Now the Lord Jesus is the Head of the Church, and the Church is "the body of Christ, and all we are members one of another." And because we belong to Christ, are accepted in Christ, and are loved by Christ, where Christ is, there we must be also. Thus it follows that our oneness with the Lord Jesus places us in the very bosom of the Father. All our atoning merits centering in Christ, all our worthiness springing from Christ, with this one, ever-prevalent, all-accepted plea, we go, and in childlike love, freedom, and simplicity, lay our sinful, weary, storm-tossed soul, in the soothing, sheltering bosom of the Father. There rests our elder brother; and there, in virtue

of their relation to him, rests all “his brethren”—the weak and infirm, the tried and sorrowful, the bruised and tempted of the one family of God, the sacred and invisible brotherhood of Christ. All repose where Jesus reposes—*in the Father's bosom.*

The *posture* is as expressive as the privilege is great. It implies identity of nature with the Father—intimate knowledge of the Father—confidential communications to the Father—and the tenderest love and sympathy ever flowing from the Father. Oh it is a blessed posture, expressive of the perfect *nearness* of the Christian to God. Could we be nearer to God than to dwell, moment by moment, in His very heart? Nor this alone. It involves a pledge—solemn and binding as eternity—that all who repose there sincerely desire and earnestly aim to bring their heart and will and life into filial obedience and harmony with the mind and precepts of God. The bosom of the Father is the HOLIEST place in the universe—it is tender, yet awful; winning,

yet solemn—and none repose there but those who, participating in its deep love, and sympathizing with its Divine sanctity, aim in all things to be conformed to the Divine image. The bosom of the Father is not the place of the alien, the refuge of the outlawed rebel; it is the home and dwelling-place of the loving and obedient child. “*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*”

And what are some of the varied *circumstances*, in the Christian’s chequered experience, in which the privilege of dwelling in the love of God is felt to be especially precious and appropriate? May we not specify, as among the chief, *the season of parental chastisement?* The rod of your heavenly Father is upon you. In the experience of your sensitive spirit, your feeling heart, the stroke is a heavy and a sore one. To a keen sense of its severity is, perhaps, added the yet keener conviction of the sin that has evoked it—that, but for your wanderings from God, your rebellion against His will,

your disobedience of His commands, there had not lighted upon you a correction so painful and humiliating. But whither in your sorrow will you repair? To the solace and sympathy of whose heart will you betake yourself? Will you flee from that Father? Will you evade His eye and shun His presence? Eternal love forbids it! What then? You will hasten and throw yourself in His arms, and fall upon His bosom, confessing your sins, and imploring His forgiveness. Thus taking hold of His strength, with that displeased and chastening Father you are in a moment at peace. Blessed is the man, O Lord, whom thou chasatest, and drawest closer within the sacred pavilion of thy loving, sheltering bosom. Oh what an unveiling of the *heart* of God may be seen in a loving correction! No truth in experimental religion is more verified than this, that the severest discipline of our heavenly Father springs from His deepest, holiest *love*. That in His rebukes, however severe, in His corrections, however

bitter, there is more love, more tenderness, and more real desire for our well-being, than exists in the fondest affection a human heart ever cherished. And oftentimes, in His providential dealings with His children, there is more of the heart of God unfolded in a dark, overhanging cloud than is ever unveiled and revealed in a bright and glowing sunbeam. But this truth is only learned in God's school.

Amidst the many changes and vicissitudes of time, how precious becomes this truth! Out of God, "nothing is fixed but change." "Passing away," is inscribed upon all earth's fairest scenes. How the heart saddens as the recollections of reminiscences of other days come crowding back upon the memory. Years of our childhood—where have ye fled? Friends of our youth—whither are ye gone? Hopes the heart once fondly cherished, joys the heart once deeply felt, how have ye, like Syrian flowers, faded and died! All, all is changing, but the Unchanging One. Other

hearts prove cold, other friendships alter—adversity beclouds them—inconstancy chills them—distance separates them—death removes them from us for ever. But there is *One* heart that loves us, clings to us, follows us in all times of adversity, poverty, sickness, and death, with an unchanged, unchangeable affection—it is the heart of our Father in heaven. Oh turn you to this heart, ye who have reposed in a human bosom, until you have felt the last faint pulse of love expire. Ye who have lost health, or fortune, or friends, or fame—be your soul's peaceful, sure asylum, the Father's bosom, until these calamities be overpast. And when from God we have strayed, and the Holy Spirit restores us to reflection, penitence, and prayer, and we exclaim, “I will arise!”—whose bosom invites and woos us back to its still warm, unchanged, and forgiving affection? whose but the bosom of the Father?—that same Father thus touchingly, exquisitely portrayed: “*And when he was a great way off, his father saw*

him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." Oh who is a God like unto Thee? With a privilege so precious as this, shall not our future *progress* in the Divine life be in some degree commensurate with its costliness? Turning our back more upon the world—living more decidedly for God, for Christ, and for eternity—our spiritual advance and posture will more closely resemble the Church as it was seen, "*Coming up out of the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved.*"

And what a *uniting* truth is this in its influence upon the household of faith! Realized in all its preciousness, and experienced in all its power, would difference of judgment be allowed to produce alienation of heart in the Church of the Lord Jesus? Assuredly not! The true and sad secret of the low ebb of Christian love, of the great and cold distance at which they stand from each other who are purchased by one and the same Atonement, who are inhabited by one and the same Spirit, who are journey-

ing to one and the same heaven, is to be found in the faint and imperfect realization of this great uniting truth, that *all* the saints repose alike in the bosom of the Father. Dwelling so little in their Father's love, is it surprising that they dwell so little in each other's love? How touching is Christ's plea—" *All ye are brethren;*" "*One is your Father.*" What an argument for brotherly love is this!—The love that bounds beyond the wall of separation to embrace its object; the love that asks not the clime, the creed, the church—recognizing only the image of the Father, and relationship to the Elder Brother, as the sole term of its affection, confidence, and sympathy; the love that "*suffereth long, and is kind, that envieth not, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil.*" Who should be more closely united in affection and service as those who are, in the words addressed by Augustine to his friend Alpius, "Eodem

sanguine Christi glutinati"—Cemented with the same blood of Christ—and to this, we add, who are bound together in the same heart of the Father? Oh how should this great truth draw the saints of God nearer and still nearer to each other—even as rays of light more closely approach and blend as they converge towards their common centre. Christian reader, let this year find you more warmly and prayerfully than ever devoted to a work so holy in itself, and so pleasing to your heavenly Father, as the promoting of an increased affection and manifested unity amongst the severed and separated, but the essentially ONE and indivisible, family of God. "*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.*"

Dwelling in the bosom of the Father, forget not that throughout this year there is no needed and no asked blessing which that bosom can refuse you. Never will God chide you for asking too much. His tender upbraiding is that you ask too little,

"Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it." Oh be satisfied with asking nothing less than God *himself*. God only can make you happy. He only can supply the loss—fill the void—guide you safely, and keep you securely unto His eternal kingdom. God loves you! Oh imbosom yourself in His love; and then, were all other love to wane and die—were it to chill in your friend—to cease its throbings in a father's bosom—to quit its last and holiest home on earth—a *mother's heart*—still, assured that you had an interest in the love of God, a home in the bosom of the Father, no being in the universe were happier than you. To that bosom take your every sorrow; from it draw your every joy. Let no cloud veil it from your view. The moment it is intercepted, repair to the cross, and sprinkled afresh with the *precious Blood of Christ*, you shall again feel yourself at home in the bosom of your Father. Let the grief you bear, the evil you dread, the sadness and loneliness you feel, but conduct you closer

and yet closer within the loving, sheltering heart of God. No fear can agitate, no sorrow can sadden, no foe can reach you there ! The moment you find yourself resting in childlike faith upon God, that moment all is peace !

Upon whose bosom, dear reader, does *your* soul repose ? Where are you relying for affection and friendship, for sympathy and support ? There is but One who can meet your rational desires, your mental disquietudes, your soul's longing, your heart's pantings—it is God, revealed in the Son of His love, His heart unveiled in the person and work of the Lord Jesus. Want you a bosom friend ?—Christ is that Friend. He is the Friend of poor sinners—sinners just like you. He died for the vilest ; shed His blood for the guiltiest ; saves the chief of sinners—freely, graciously, without money, and without price. His precious blood cleanseth from *all* sin. Make Christ, then, your bosom friend ; receive Him into your heart, and He will take you into His heart.

Unveil to Him your secret sorrows, and He will make known to you His hidden love. Believe in Jesus! Go and imitate, in the closeness of your walk with God, in your intimate fellowship with Christ, the holy example of *the disciple whom Jesus loved, who leaned upon His breast at supper.* There is room there for you. *He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom.* Sick one—bereaved one—chastened one—aged one, recline upon the bosom of the Father, and be still.

“ His arm is beneath thee,
His eye is above;
His Spirit within thee,
Says, rest in my love.”

And let us be watchful and prayerful—drawing all grace from the fulness of Christ—that we do not grieve the bosom upon which we recline, by questioning its love, distrusting its faithfulness, or opposing its known wishes and commands. And oh, when the final hour comes—when comes the last sickness, and the last glance of earth,

and the last look of love, and the last tear
of sorrow—the world receding, eternity
nearing, heaven opening ;—where wilt thou
then pillow thy restless, languishing, dying
head?—where but *on the bosom of the Father?*
And when thy spirit, escaping from earth to
heaven, from sin and sorrow and suffering
below, to a sinless, sorrowless, sunny home
above, where will it find itself at last?—
safely, serenely, and for ever reposing upon
THE BOSOM OF THE FATHER :

“ Thy stroke, O Death—terror of the world—I hail;
’Twill snap the fetters of my captive soul,
And set me free—free to wing the vasty realms of
being,
Inbreathe the freest air of life divine,
And bask me in the sunshine of eternal love.”

ONLY TRUST ME.

“Only believe.”—*Mark v. 36.*

PRECIOUS and significant are the words of Jesus, the *very same* words that He spake when on earth. Did those lips—glowing with more than a seraph’s hallowed touch, lips into which grace without measure was poured—ever breathe a sentence more touching, more simple, or more significant than this, “Only believe?” Originally addressed to an afflicted parent, who sought His compassion and His help in behalf of a little daughter lying at the point of death, they seem to be especially appropriate to every case of anxiety, of trial, and of need. Alas! how many such will scan this page—how many a sigh will breathe over it, how many a tear will moisten it, how many a

mournful glance will light upon it. Be it so—there comes back a voice of sympathy responsive to each sad heart—not man, but Jesus speaks—“Only believe”—in other words—“only trust.” What is faith, but *trust*? what is *believing* in Jesus, but *trusting* in Jesus? When Jesus says, “Only believe Me,” He literally says, “Only trust Me.” And what a natural, beautiful, soothing definition of the word *faith* is this! Many a volume has been written to explain the nature and illustrate the operation of *faith*—the subject and the reader remaining as much mystified and perplexed as ever. But who can fail to comprehend the meaning of the good old Saxon word, *trust*? All can understand what this means. When, therefore, Jesus says—as He does to every individual who reads these words—“Only believe Me,” He literally says, “Only trust Me.” Thus He spake to the anxious father who besought Him to come and heal his child: “Only believe—only trust my power, only trust my compassion, only trust my

word, be not afraid, only trust Me." And thus He speaks to you, believer. Oh for a heart to respond, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth!"

With this posture of soul Christ invites us to commence the year. Could there be one more appropriate? Trust implies, on our part, mystery and ignorance, danger and helplessness. Such is the condition and prospect, and such are the feelings with which we greet the return of a new period of time. How wrapt in inscrutability, how shadowy and unreal is all the future! As we attempt to penetrate the dark clouds, what strange forebodings steal over our spirits. With a feeling of uncertainty connected with all before us, we seem to clutch our blessings with a more nervous grasp, to enfold our treasures within a closer embrace, and to shrink back ourselves from the mystic symbols of the strange unknown. Just at this juncture Jesus approaches, and with address most winning, and in accents most gentle, speaks these words, "Only believe

—only *trust* Me! Trust Me, who knoweth the end from the beginning—trust Me, who hath all resources at my command—trust Me, whose love never changes, whose wisdom never misleads, whose word never fails, whose eye never slumbers nor sleeps—*only trust* Me!” Enough, my blessed Lord, my soul replies. I will sit me down a loving child, a lowly disciple at thy feet, and, indistinct and dreary as my future path may be, will learn from Thee how and where I may *trust Thee* all my journey through.

The *necessity* that exists for faith, or trust in Jesus, seems almost too obvious to require extended remark. We find an illustration in the construction of human society. This beautiful fabric is held together, and sustained in its multiform operations, simply upon a principle of *faith*. Every pin that binds it would be loosed, and every spring that moves it would be relaxed, were this principle of *trust* withdrawn or impaired. The commercial world, too, is carried on in its vast and complicated enterprises upon

this same principle of faith, or trust. Eager to dispute, and affecting to despise it when brought to bear upon the claims and the realities of a world hidden and invisible, man yet pleads for, and adopts it, in matters that concerns a life that is seen and that is passing away. He will credit the announcement of a discovery in science, believe a fact in history, and embark his entire capital in a commercial enterprise in the exercise of a simple, naked faith in the word, the integrity, or the skill of another; but on the testimony of God's Word he will not believe aught that it reveals. Revelation, travelling from a distant and unseen world with announcements infinitely great, revealing facts transcendently momentous, and based upon grounds which reason cannot dispute nor scepticism gainsay, asks the simple and unquestioning faith of man. Does he believe? Does he fully admit the Bible to be the Word of God? Does he believe in its awful declaration that there is a hell, and in its glorious delineation of a heaven? Does

he receive the salvation it announces, believe in the Saviour it reveals, and adopt the character it enjoins? Alas! he will credit the veriest fictions, will surrender his credulity to the wildest conjectures, will receive unquestioningly fables as facts, falsehoods as verities, announcements as true, based on evidence the most slender and dubious; and yet, from the depth of his unbelieving heart, scorn as a forgery and reject as a lie the eternal, divinely-authenticated and unchangeable truth of God—revealing a world so solemn, truths so momentous—a heaven—a hell—a Saviour in which are bound up individual interests inconceivably precious and undying. Such is the moral insanity of the carnal mind. “Madness is in their heart while they live.” But we suppress this train of thought, and proceed to illustrate the *necessity* of the believer’s trust in God in view of the yet undeveloped, unshaped circumstances and events of the future.

When we consider the convulsions of

life's future—limited it shall be within the brief space of twelvemonths—how varied and undulating the path ! It resembles, in its windings and its changes, the serpentine course of a river, as it pursues its way—now suddenly disappearing behind jutting rocks or towering headlands, now bursting into view again and rushing on, foaming and sparkling, through smiling meadows and sunny slopes—then, by some sudden course, lost again to view—surely the believer will feel the need of confidence in an invisible hand to guide him through the labyrinth of his intricately tortuous way. This cloud of mystery, enshrouding all the future from our view, bids us *trust*. Not a step can we take by sight. We cannot even conjecture, much less decide, what the morrow will unfold in our history—what sweet sunbeam shall illumine, or what sombre cloud shall shade our path. How little can we divine what loved ones, now clustering around our fireside, will, ere this year closes, have left us for the spirit land—what storm

shall wreck our fortunes or our fame—at what distant part of the globe, and in what sanctuary, the last Sabbath in the year shall find us worshipping: or how soon we ourselves shall quit our princely halls and broad acres, or our lowly homes and limited possessions, and join the long, gloomy procession that has just preceded us to eternity. How veiled from sight the next bend of our path! But Jesus says, “Only trust Me!”

The number, invisibility, and insidiousness of our spiritual foes—their combined power, and the surprisal of their incessant assaults—demands our trust in Jesus. Nothing is more unseen than the principalities and powers through which we have to force our way to heaven. Satan is invisible—his agents are unseen—moral evil veiled—our hearts a great deep—the world masked—truly we have need to cling to, and confide in, Jesus, the Captain of our salvation, seeing that “we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness

of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places," and that therefore we are to take to ourselves the whole armour of God, remembering that this is the victory that overcometh the world, and with it the god of this world, even our *faith* or *trust* in Jesus.

The foreign source of all our supplies for the battle and the journey of life pleads for our trust in Jesus. In ourselves we have no resources. Grace is not natural to us, holiness is not innate, and our native strength is but another term for utter impotence. Bankrupt of everything that is morally strong, righteous, and lovely, we are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Where, then, are our supplies? All in Jesus. "It hath pleased the Father that in Him all fulness should dwell." "Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places (things) in Christ." Christ is both the believer's armoury and his granary. The weapons of our warfare and the sup-

plies of our necessities—our ammunition and our nourishment—all are in Christ. And the life we live as warriors and as pilgrims must be a life of continuous coming to, and trusting in, a full Christ, an all-sufficient Saviour. If, as each morning dawns, and ere we gird ourselves for the conflict, the duties and the trials of the day, we breathe from our hearts to our Heavenly Father, who knows our need and is pledged to its supply, the prayer—"Give me, my Father, *this day*, my *daily* bread; I look to Thee for the wisdom that counsels me, for the power that keeps me, for the love that soothes me, for the grace that sanctifies me, and for the presence that cheers me; now supply my need, and do unto me as seemeth good to Thee"—each day's provision would be meted out, and we should experience the blessedness of living upon a Father's bounty, upon the Saviour's grace, and upon the Spirit's love.

We now come to consider the principle of faith, or trust. It is altogether divine—

created by no human power, commanded by no human authority; and sustained by no human resources. “Faith is the gift of God.” Jesus is its Author and its Finisher. It is a free, unmerited, unpurchased bestowment. It is given to the poor because of their poverty, to the vile because they are unworthy, to the bankrupt because they have “nothing to pay.” All human boasting and vain excuses are thus swept away, and the truth stands out radiant with its own divine lustre—“By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, *it is the gift of God.*” Such, then, is the faith, or trust, which the Bible enforces, and which these pages are designed to illustrate. There is, first, what an old divine would term a “brazen serpent faith.” That is, a faith that looks alone to Jesus for salvation. It brings the penitent soul to His feet, it leads it to His blood for cleansing, and to His righteousness for acceptance. It looks to Jesus as the wounded Israelite did to the brazen serpent which Moses up-

lifted upon the pole. Reader, have *you* this brazen serpent faith? As this year unfolds the first page of your hidden history, can you humbly say, “Let what will betide, I am saved; I am *converted!* I am in the ark, and have a hope laid up in heaven?” Oh wondrous words are these, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.” Then, there is what the same divine would term a “golden sceptre faith”—a faith that enables the soul to draw near to God. When Ahasuerus extended the golden sceptre to queen Esther, it was the symbol of her approach, the token of her welcome: She drew near, touched it, and held audience with the king, and he granted her all that she desired. Thus the soul draws near to God the Father through Christ. Christ is to the sinner what the golden sceptre was to the queen—the appointed medium of access, “For through Him we both have ac-

cess, by one Spirit, unto the Father." Oh, with *such* a medium of approach to God—so near, so suited, so precious—why should we stand afar off? why doubt, and linger, and hesitate? "Having therefore, brethren, boldness (or liberty) to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, let us *draw NEAR.*" And now, for what would Christ have us trust Him? "Only believe—only trust Me."

Only trust the Salvation of Christ.—He would have us commence with what He has constituted the central truth of the gospel—the Cross. God has made it the focus of His glory—for around no object do such wonders and glories gather as at the cross of Christ—and He would have us make it the central fact of our faith. What a sure ground of trust for a poor sinner is here—the great and complete salvation of the Lord Jesus. Here God Himself rests—for He has confided all His glory to Christ, whom "He has made strong for Himself." And surely if the work of Jesus were suffi-

cient to uphold the moral government and secure the eternal honour of God, there need be no demur, no hesitation on the part of the sinner, there to place his entire trust for forgiveness and acceptance. Sinner as you are, here is a salvation worthy of your confidence. "Christ died for the ungodly." "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities." "Through His blood we have redemption, even the forgiveness of our sins." "By Him all that believe are justified." The great debt to divine justice Christ has paid. His resurrection from the dead by the glory of the Father is His complete discharge, and now, "whosoever will, may come and drink of the water of life freely." To each guilt-stricken, heart-broken, sorrow-burdened, weary sinner Jesus says, "*Only* TRUST Me." Beloved reader, no partial trust must this be. Your foothold on every other foundation must give way—your grasp upon every other support must loosen, your clinging to duties, to works,

to self, in every form, must yield—and your whole, implicit, sole trust for salvation must be in the one Atonement which God has provided, in the one salvation which Christ has finished, in the only name given under heaven whereby we must be saved. Pointing to *Himself* as the only door by which you can come to God, the only way by which you can be justified, the only life by which you can live, Jesus says to you, “Only trust Me.”

Only trust in the love of Christ.—Never was there before—nor has there been since—nor ever will be again—such ancient, marvellous, stupendous love as the love of Jesus! It is the astonishment of heaven, it is the wonder of angels, and in their best, holiest, and most self-abased moments, it is the marvel of saints on earth, and will be, through eternity, their study and their praise. His condescending stoop to our nature—His descent from heaven’s glory to earth’s meanness—His bearing our sins—his endurance of our curse—His suffering our

penalty—His exhaustion of our bitter cup—His resurrection from the grave, and His ascent into heaven, are facts which speak, louder and sweeter than an angel's trumpet, the love of Christ to His Church. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it." But not only was Jesus the unveiler of His own heart, but He came to unveil the heart of God. He came, not to inspire the heart of God with an affection for man—but to make known a love already and from eternity existing. He who only knew the secret love of God's heart, came to reveal that secret. So that Jesus was the exponent of God's love, its only revealer, and its most precious. gift. Christ is God's love embodied—God's love speaking, God's love acting, God's love weeping, God's love dying, God's love inviting. Blessed truth, that he whose arms of faith embrace Christ, in and through Christ also embrace the Triune Jehovah. Now the Lord Jesus would have us commence the year with fresh

confidence in His love to us—that confidence, or *trust*, accompanying us through its entire course. He invites us to *trust* His love when it wears the disguise of displeasure; when, changing its appearance and its tones, it looks and speaks threatening and unkind. What a harsh disguise did Joseph wear to his brethren—and yet beneath it there never beat a more loving, tender, or kinder heart than his. Such is our Jesus—the Brother who has saved us from famine and from death—and has done for us more than Joseph did for *his* brethren—has *died* for us. Let us trust this love. Trust it when veiled—trust it when it threatens to slay—trust it when it appears to frown—trust it when even we cannot trace it; still, oh still let us trust in Jesus' love, when, to our dim sight, it would seem never to smile, or speak to us again. The time may come, and the circumstances may arise, that shall put to the utmost test our confidence in the Saviour's love. When it shall say to us, “Can you surrender this idol—can you make this

sacrifice—can you bear this cross—can you undertake this service—for Me?" Oh blessed, if your heart can reply, " Lord! relying upon thy grace, trusting in thy love, I can—I will—I do!" Oh touching attitude of Jesus, who, just as the dark, uncertain vista stands open to our view, our hearts all quaking for fear of what may transpire, meets us at the threshold, and says, " Only believe—only *trust* my love, wisely, gently, safely to guide you through the wilderness into the good land that lies beyond."

Only trust in the Power of Christ.—Divine Power, not less than love, is a perfection we shall require at every step of our yet untried and unknown path. We shall have wants which none but the power that multiplied the five loaves to supply the hunger of the five thousand can meet—difficulties, which none but the power that asks, " Is anything too hard for me, saith the Lord?" can overcome—enemies, with whom none but the power that resisted Satan, vanquished death, and broke from the grave-

can cope. All this power is on our side if our trust is in the Lord. "All power is mine in heaven and in earth," exclaims Jesus. This power which the Lord exerts on our behalf, and in which He invites us to trust, is made perfect in weakness. Hence, we learn it in the same lesson that teaches us the utter want of strength in ourselves. And when the Lord has reduced our confidence, and weakened our strength, as in the case of Gideon, whose army He reduced from thirty-two thousand men to three hundred, He then puts forth His power, perfects it in our weakness, gives us the victory, and secures to Himself all the praise. What a year of blessing, then, will this be, if we go forward relying upon the power of Jesus to do all in us, and accomplish all for us. Power to subdue our sins—power to keep our hearts—power to uphold our steps—power gently to lead us over rough places, firmly to keep us in smooth places, skilfully to guide us through crooked paths, and safely to conduct us through all perils, fully

to vindicate us from all assaults, and completely to cover our head in the day of battle. Invincible is that soul thus clad in the panoply of Christ's power. The power which belongs to Him as God, and the power which He possesses as Mediator, is all exerted in the behalf of those who put their trust in Him. "Thou hast given Him power (are His own words) over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him." Child of God! gird yourself for the duties, the toils and trials of another year, "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Hear Him say to thee, ere thou dost take one step in the bending path opening to your view, "Only believe—only trust Me." And when the stone of difficulty confronts you—lying, perhaps, heavily upon some buried mercy—hear Him ask you, ere He rolls it quite away—"Believest thou that I am able to do this?" Oh that your trusting heart may instantly respond, "Yea, Lord, I believe, I trust; for with Thee all things are possible."

Only trust the faithfulness of Christ.—There can be no perfection of the Lord Jesus of more exalted glory in his eye than His *veracity*. If the truthfulness of Christ can be impeached, then no reliable confidence can be placed in anything that He is, that He does, or that He says. But because He is not only truthful, but *truth*, His word eternally fixed and unalterable—"righteousness the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins," veracity an essential perfection of His nature—He condescendingly appeals to our confidence, and says, "Only *trust* Me." And have we, in any single instance, ever had reason to doubt His word? Has He ever given us cause to distrust Him? Has the Lord ever been to us a wilderness, a land of darkness, an exhausted fountain, a dried spring? No, never! He has often done *more* than He promised—never *less*. It is *impossible* for Him to lie. His word is truth. All the promises of God are yea and amen in Him. Has He promised to be a Father, a Husband,

a Brother, and a Friend to those who put their trust in Him? Has He pledged to guide their steps, to supply their wants, to shield their souls to do them good and not evil, to be with them down to old age, and even unto death? Then hear Him say, “Only believe—only *trust* Me. Trust my word—for it is truth; trust my promises—for they are yea and amen; trust me—for I am God.” Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of His word shall fail. “Only believe—only trust.”

Only trust Christ as the Answerer of Prayer.—As the Mediator and High Priest of His Church it is one of Christ’s especial prerogatives that He has to do with the *prayers* of His saints. Standing midway between God and the suppliant, He intercepts the petition, purifies it from all taint, divests it of all imperfections, supplies its deficiencies, and then blending it with His own merits, perfuming it with the much incense of His atoning sacrifice, He presents it to the Father endorsed with His name,

and urged by His own suit. Thus the believer has an “ Advocate with the Father,” who “ ever liveth to make intercession.” Oh costly and precious privilege, that of *prayer!* Access to God—fellowship with the Most High—communion with the Invisible One—filial intercourse with our Heavenly Father—mighty privilege this! And yet, vast as it is, it is *ours*. There will not, beloved, be a sweeter, a holier, and more precious blessing unfolded to you throughout this year’s experience than this. With the warrant of approaching God, through Christ, with every want and trial, with every sorrow and temptation, with every fear, burden, and sin; yea, unveiling to His eye the profoundest and most sacred secret of your heart, is there out of heaven a richer, holier privilege? Then, beloved, with the throne of grace accessible moment by moment—with the Holy Spirit disclosing each want, inditing each petition, and framing each request—with Christ at the right hand of God, presenting the petition—and with a

Father in heaven bowing down His ear, and hearkening but to answer—surely we may “trust, and be not afraid.” “Only believe—only trust Me.”

Only trust in the sympathy of Christ.—The blessing of creature sympathy we would not undervalue. The word of God does not. The Scriptures of truth enjoin and encourage it, yea, command it. “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.” “If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it.” We believe it to be no small evidence of grace, and to assimilate in no little degree with the mind that was also in Christ Jesus, to “weep with those that weep.” And yet so enamoured of it may we be, so look and cling to it, as to be insensible to the higher, purer, deeper sympathy of Christ. The power of human sympathy, like everything created, must necessarily be limited. A Christian brother or sister has so much personal trial, anxiety, and pressure of his own, the marvel is that a single chord of a

heart, all whose strings are stretched to such tension on its own account, can emit a solitary note of real sympathy with our grief. Let us, then, be thankful to God for the smallest measure of true human sympathy. But there is no limit, no fathom to the sympathy of Jesus. It is real, human, most tender, boundless, fathomless. It enters into all our sorrows, and with a penetration and delicacy indescribable, it insinuates itself into all the shades and peculiarities of our sorrow. It even enters into our *infirmities*. Infirmities into which others cannot enter, and still more with which we can ill bear ourselves, Jesus sympathizes with. Infirmities of temperament—*infirmities of constitution—*infirmities of habit—*infirmities of education—*infirmities of position—bodily, mental, and spiritual infirmities—there is One who enters deeply into all!*** He has borne them all—bears them still. Commiserating the feebleness of our nature—for it is still the robe He wears in heaven—He patiently bears with*

us, tenderly deals with us, and gently soothes, succours, and sustains us. "For we have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." In this sympathy Jesus would have us confide. And if upon your opening path there falls the forecasting shadow of some approaching sorrow—if the sky is lowering and the surge is swelling—meet it by a renewed appeal to the anticipated compassion and intercession of Christ. JESUS!—what a plenitude of sympathy, tenderness, and grace is in that name! Run into it, and you shall be safe from the coming storm. And when the darkling sorrow cometh—the rose hue of health paling—blossoms falling—flowers withering—hope expiring—fame, fortune, friends, like the orient tints of evening, fading one by one away—remember that in JESUS you

have a Brother born for your adversity, a Friend who loved you in eternity—loved you on the cross—loves you on the throne—and will love you unto the end. He will make the cloud His chariot—will walk upon your stormy waters—and will say, “ Peace, be still !” “ Only believe—only trust Me.”

“ Commit thou all thy griefs
 And ways into His hands,
 To His sure truth and tender care,
 Who earth and heaven commands.

“ Give to the winds thy fears ;
 Hope, and be undismayed ;
 God hears thy sighs, and counts thy tears ;
 God shall lift up thy head.

“ Through waves, and clouds, and storms,
 He gently clears thy way :
 Wait thou His time—thy darkest night
 Shall end in brightest day.”

Such is the soul-posture to which the Lord invites us, and in which He would have us calmly repose in view of a year which promises to be one of much national disquietude and of severe social pressure. The war cloud lowers more darkly than ever—our fathers, our sons, and our brothers

are girding them for a yet more fearful conflict—the narrowed resources of many—the critical position of capital—the under-flowing current of restlessness and agitation working its way upward to the surface, are indices to an intelligent, reflective mind of an advancing period of extreme pressure and anxiety. With what feeling shall we confront it?—TRUST IN GOD. “Only believe—only trust Me,” are the words with which Jesus seeks at once to inspire our confidence and allay our fears. There is no act of the soul more acceptable to God, because there is none that brings more glory to His Great Name than this. Wherever we trace in the Scriptures of truth a *trust* in the Lord, there we find especial and remarkable deliverance. It is recorded of the children of Israel that the Lord delivered their enemies into their hand, “for they cried to God in the battle, and He was intreated of them; *because they put their trust in Him.*” Again, we read of God’s wondrous message, sent by Jeremiah to Ebed-melech, the

Ethiopian, “I will surely deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be for a prey unto thee; *because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the Lord,*” Jeremiah xxxix. 16, 18. The *experience*, too, of God’s people confirms the blessedness of trusting in the Lord. “In God have I put my *trust*; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.” “I will *trust* in the covert of thy wings.” “It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man.” “Oh my God, save thy servant that *trusteth* in Thee.” “The Lord is my trust and my shield; my heart *trusted* in Him, and I am helped.” The *promises* connected with trusting in the Lord are equally rich and encouraging. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee; because he *trusteth* in Thee. *Trust* in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord JEHOVAH is everlasting strength.” “The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord; He is their strength in the time of trouble. And the Lord shall help them, and deliver them:

for He shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, *because they trust in Him.*" "None of them that *trust* in Him shall be desolate." "The Lord knoweth them that *trust* in Him." "Oh how great is thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee; which Thou hast wrought for them that *trust* in Thee before the sons of men. Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence." "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, *trusting in the Lord.*" What a marvellous and precious cluster of divine encouragements to those who trust in the Lord with all their heart, under all circumstances and at all times! "*Only trust,*" is Jesus' word. "This is all that I ask of thee, the utmost thing I require at thy hand. I demand no costly sacrifice—no wearisome pilgrimage—no personal worthiness—no strength, or wisdom, or self-endeavours of thine own. *Only TRUST ME.* Only believe that I wait to answer prayer—that I am gracious—that I have all power at my command—that I have your interests at heart

—that there is no good thing I am willing to withhold—that I, and I alone, can guide your present steps, can unravel the web of your difficulties, guide your perplexities, extricate you from the snares that have woven their network around your feet, and bring you through fire and through water into a healthy place. *Only trust Me!*" Beloved, is this too hard? Is the request unreasonable and impracticable? What! *only to trust Jesus!* Only to trust your wants to His ear—your burdens to His arm—your sorrows to His heart? Is *this* too hard? Is it beyond your power? Then tell Jesus so! Remind Him of His own words, "*Without Me ye can do nothing.*" And ask at His hand the faith to trust, the heart to trust, the courage to trust, and the power to trust all your interests, temporal and spiritual, for time and for eternity, into His hands.

This trusting implies a ceasing from self, and from all confidence in the arm of flesh, and from all reliance in unbelieving, carnal plans and schemes to obtain deliver-

ance from the pressure of present trial, and supplies for present need. It involves a constant, prayerful, and believing leaning *on* the Lord ; a quiet, patient waiting *for* the Lord ; a peaceful, child-like, passive resting *in* the Lord ; and a holy, filial walking *with* the Lord. Recollect—a leaning *upon* Christ, a waiting *for* Christ, a resting *in* Christ, and a walking *with* Christ. Only do this in all the events of this year—in all your trials and temptations, wants and sorrows, and it shall be in truth a happy year. Only trust Him to lead you by a right way to bring you to heaven. Only trust Him to appear in His own good time to deliver you from a present cross, to remove a present burden, to supply a present need, and to conduct you into the green pastures and the sweet flowing waters of His truth and love. So delightsome to Him will be this calm, submissive trust—so honouring of His faithfulness, and so glorifying to His name this full, implicit confidence—He will honour and bless you by

granting the desires of your heart, and bestowing, from the plenitude of His resources, every blessing that you ask and need.

Above all other trusts, trust to Jesus your priceless *soul*. Relax your grasp upon everything else but Jesus. Let go your religious duties and doings—your sacraments and prayers, your works of righteousness, and Babel-built hopes of heaven—and only *trust*, and trust *only* in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. No poor, penitent sinner did He ever reject—none was He ever known to cast away. And if you come and trust in His righteousness alone to justify you, and to give you acceptance with God, and a title to eternal glory, you will be the first that ever perished at His feet—if you perish there! Cease from all unbelieving reasonings and proud objections. If you are conscious of your need of pardon ; if, above all things, you desire pardon ; if you despair of doing anything whatsoever to deserve it ; if you are really willing to receive it, as guilty,

condemned, helpless, dying men; then you are as much warranted as sinners can be to go, in Christ's name, to the mercy-seat, and to take this complete and eternal pardon as your own. To you, as well as to the proud in heart, God says, "Put Me in remembrance—Let us plead together." "Tell Me not for ever of thine unfitness for My kingdom, thy rebellion, and thy crimes. Tell Me of Mine invitations to the guilty, and My promises to the lost. Tell Me of the blood that was shed to save thee. Tell Me of the tears, and prayers, and righteousness, the cross and passion of My Son. Show Me that thou canst trust My words. Only believe, and though thou wert as sinful as the cursing Peter, or as unworthy as the persecuting Saul, I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions, for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."*

Are you a lone widow? a helpless orphan? homeless, friendless? Does your heart nurse some secret sorrow, some anxious

* Bradley.

care, some crushing burden? Is life's landscape draped in wintry gloom, and all thy future cheerless, starless, uncertain to your view? Come, beloved, and hear the wondrous, sympathizing, cheering words of Jesus—"Only trust me!" Hear thy Father and thy God say—"As thy day, so shall thy strength be." "As thy day." Each new burden shall bring its support; each new difficulty, its guidance; each new sorrow, its soothing; and each new day, its strength. Be it your only care to deny all ungodliness, and to walk worthy of your high vocation; to separate yourself more widely and distinctly from the world, its practices and its spirit; to more closely resemble Christ in His gentle, charitable, forgiving spirit; and yielding yourself more entirely to the disposal of the Lord, to do as seemeth Him good. And should you this year be called to meet death—to hear the summons that bids you *rise*—then, when all other things are receding from your view, and all other voices are dying upon your ear, Jesus will

approach, and, amidst the gloom and stillness of the shadowy vale, you shall see His person, and hear Him say—"BE NOT AFRAID—ONLY TRUST ME!"

"When adverse winds and waves arise,
And in the heart despondence sighs;
When life her throng of care reveals,
And weakness o'er my spirit steals;
Grateful I hear the kind decree,
That 'as thy day, thy strength shall be.'

"When, with sad footsteps, memory roves
'Mid smitten joys and buried loves;
When sleep my tearful pillow flies,
And dewy morning drinks my sighs;
Still to thy promise, Lord, I flee,
That 'as thy day, thy strength shall be.'

"One trial more must yet be past,
One pang, the keenest and the last;
And when with brow convulsed and pale,
My feeble quivering heart-strings fail,
Redeemer, grant my soul to see
That 'as her day, her strength shall be.' **

"COMMIT THY WAY UNTO THE LORD;
TRUST ALSO IN HIM; AND HE SHALL BRING IT
TO PASS."

* Mrs. Sigourney.

IT IS WELL.

“And she answered, It is well.”—*2 Kings iv. 26.*

A DARK cloud was now settling upon the home of the Shunammite woman and her husband. As the evening of life drew on, and life itself had lost its object and its charms, according to the promise of the prophet, God gave them a son. It was an unexpected and precious gift. He came like a winter’s flower, to gladden them with its late and delicate beauty, and to refresh them with its rich and rare fragrance. The stillness of their home was now broken with the echo of childhood’s gaiety, and the walls which the twilight shadows had been slowly darkening now smiled with unwonted light. Life assumed another aspect with its new object and a new purpose. God had given

them a being whom, by the tenderest of bonds and the dearest of rights, they could call their own. Approaching towards manhood they seemed about to reap, in a more full enjoyment of their treasure, the reward of their early anxiety and care. He would now become their intelligent companion, the beautiful staff of their declining years—abroad sharing the field-toil of his father, and at home beguiling the hours of his mother, and often kneeling at her side while both would implore the blessing of Israel's God. But God's thoughts and purposes were otherwise, and He was about to accomplish in His own way His wise and gracious designs. Just at this juncture the household plant they loved so fondly and nurtured so tenderly, whose unfolding beauty inspired such gladness and hope, sickened, drooped, and died. "*And when the child was grown,*" says the simple, touching story, "*it fell on a day that he went out to his father to the reapers.* And he said unto his father, *My head, my head.* And he said to a lad, carry him to

his mother. And when he had taken him and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died." What a withering of all their hopes ! what a crushing of all their expectations ! how anguished were now those parental hearts ! and how desolate that happy home, the shadows of which fall deeper and faster since the spirit that was its light is gone. "*He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down.*"

With a mother's smitten heart the Shunammite woman hastened to the prophet Elisha at Mount Carmel, to relate her calamity and seek in his counsel and sympathy direction and soothing in her affliction. With what frame of mind and with what words of grief does she approach the man of God ? How does she deport herself in her sad bereavement ? Does she upbraid him for promising her a son, or murmur at God for recalling him ? Does she indulge in vain lamentations that a gift unasked, when it had become so lovely and precious, had been so early, so rudely, and so sud-

denly removed? Is there any indulgence in excessive grief, in fruitless regrets, in repining thoughts, in rebellious words, aught that betrays opposition to God's will, that disputes His right, or that impeaches His wisdom, faithfulness, and love? Far, very far, from this is the posture of the Shunammite. Listen to her reply to the question of the prophet's servant sent by his master to inquire of her welfare. "Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? *is it well with the child?* And she answered, **It is WELL!**" O, touching picture of deep yet chastened sorrow! Lovely attitude of soul—meek, submissive—in the hour of keen anguish! The child was dead, and it was all winter now, but—*It is well!* The hope of future years was extinguished, and it was all disappointment now—but *It is well!* The "strong staff and the beautiful rod was broken," and the weight of years bowed them to the dust now, but—*It is well!* Could it be otherwise? The stricken parents knew that their covenant God "Him-

self had done it," and that it was *well* done. It was wise, it was righteous, it was even good, because He had done it. What moral sublimity invests this picture of domestic bereavement? What a study, were it the province of a human pencil to portray an attitude of soul so spiritual, so unearthly, almost divine! Has it no reflected image? Can we not find its copy? Yes! death still reigns—bereavement still desolates—sorrow still has its home in the human heart. But the same grace that formed this beautiful picture of holy submission, of sweet, cheerful acquiescence in the will of God, that could say, when the loved one was smitten, *It is well!* still lives to produce the same holy and blessed fruit. If, dear reader, you are lying at God's feet, His afflicted, chastened child, gazing in calm, mute submission upon the wreck of human hopes, and gently whispering, "My God, my Father, *it is well!*" then your spirit is as this Shunammite's, and God fashioneth your hearts alike. May the Holy Ghost

graciously vouchsafe His divine teaching while we glean the instruction and the comfort which these words so richly contain.

In looking back upon the by-gone Year, and forward to the New—the past, perhaps, in some of its aspects, sad and mournful, the future, cloud-veiled and uncertain—how suitable the sentiment and the spirit embodied in the words selected as the basis of our address—“IT IS WELL.” We purpose, in the following pages, to view them as the grateful acknowledgment of the *redeemed* soul—as the believing acquiescence of the *chastened* soul—and as the triumphant language of the *glorified* soul.

It is proper that we should seek our first illustration of this truth *in the salvation of God*. Salvation is God’s greatest work; in nothing has He so manifested forth His glory as in this. He embarked all His infinite resources, and staked all His divine honour in the accomplishment of this work so dear to His heart—the salvation of His Church. The universe is full of His beauty,

but myriads of worlds, on a scale infinitely more vast and magnificent than this, could give no such idea of God as the salvation of a single sinner. Salvation required the revelation and the harmony of all the divine perfections. Creation affords only a partial view of God. It displays His natural but not His moral attributes. It portrays His wisdom, His goodness, His power—but it gives no idea of His holiness, His justice, His truth, His love. It is but the alphabet, the shadow of God. These are parts of His ways, and how little of Him is known! But in the person of Immanuel, in the cross of Christ, in the finished work of redemption, God appears in full-orbed majesty. And when the believing soul surveys this wondrous expedient of reconciling all the interests of heaven, of uniting all the perfections of Jehovah in the salvation of sinners by the blood of the cross—“Mercy and truth meeting together, righteousness and peace kissing each other”—it exclaims, in full satisfaction with the salvation of God—*It is well!*

The anxious question of an awakened soul, as it bears its weight of sin to the cross, is, "Is the salvation of the Lord Jesus a work commensurate with my case? Will it meet my individual condition as a sinner? May I, in a deep conviction of my guiltiness, venture my soul upon Jesus? Am I warranted, without a work of my own, apart from all my merit or demerit, to believe in Christ and indulge the hope that I shall be saved?" The Bible, in brief but emphatic sentences, answers these inquiries. "*Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*" "*Him that cometh unto Me I will in nowise cast out.*" "*By grace are ye saved.*" "*If by grace, then it is no more of works.*" "*Ye are complete in Him.*" The Holy Spirit giving the inquirer a possession of these declarations, working the faith that receives the Lord Jesus into the heart, the believing soul is enabled to exclaim, "It is well! I see that it is a salvation for sinners, for the vilest, the poorest, the most unworthy. I came to Christ, and was re-

ceived; I believed in Him, rested in Him, and I am saved. Christ is mine, His salvation is mine, His promises are mine, His advocacy is mine, His heaven is mine. *It is well!*"

But it is not always that in the same strength of faith the child of God can say, it is well with his soul. Through the feebleness of your faith, and the power of indwelling sin, and your many conscious backslidings and infirmities, you may be led to question the well-being of your state. Harassed with doubts, assailed by temptations, agitated by fears, you tremble to say, "It is well with my soul." But let me caution you against a rash judgment or a hasty conclusion as to your real condition. I have a message from God to you, my reader: "*Say unto the righteous, it shall be well with him.*" Now, in all the spiritual exercises through which the believer in Jesus passes, it must in truth be well with him as to his real standing in Christ. You may be walking in darkness or in light; you may be mourn-

ing in the valley or be rejoicing on the mount; now conquering, now foiled; now weeping, now rejoicing; yet it is still *well* with you as a pardoned, justified, saved sinner. Nothing can touch your interest in the Saviour—or expel you from the covenant—or change the love of God towards you. There are *tides* in the faith and comfort of a child of God even as there are in the ocean. The believer has his ebb and flow, his fluctuations of spiritual feeling. It is often *low tide* with his soul. The waves of spiritual joy and peace ebb, and all looks barren and cheerless. The arid sands, the moss-covered rocks, the entangled weeds that line the shore when the ocean's waves have receded, are, in his mournful view, but the apt emblems of his spiritual state. And now he begins to question the reality of all his former experience, and the sincerity of all his past professions. He abjures his adoption, doubts his interest in Christ, puts from him the promises, appropriates the judgments, keeps back from the ordinances,

and his soul refuses to be comforted. But, beloved saint of God, is there no flow, as well as ebb, in the spiritual joy and comfort of the believer? Is there no return of the tide of faith and consolation and hope in the Christian's experience—the waves of love's infinite ocean, of the soul's perfect peace, of glory's anticipated joy rolling back again upon the shore, in sweet heavenly cadence! Oh, yes! Listen to the divine assurances of this: “*I have loved thee with an everlasting love*”—“*I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away*”—“*Yea, she may forget, yet will not I forget thee*”—“*I will never leave thee nor forsake thee*”—“*I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not*”—“*I will restore comforts unto you*”—“*Though I spake against him, yet do I remember him still*”—“*I will not leave you comfortless*”—“*Thou hast a little strength*”—“*Therefore will the Lord wait that He may be gracious unto you*”—“*He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry: when He shall hear it, He will answer thee*”—“*He*

restoreth my soul." All these exceeding great and precious promises, beloved, are *yours*. They are your Father's epistles of love, and He bids you read, believe, and enjoy them.

Yet, with all affectionate fidelity would I exhort you not to rest where you are. Be not satisfied with your present state, but seek to obtain a renewed application of the atoning blood, a fresh "blink of Jesus," as Rutherford says, looking away from your sins, backslidings and unfruitfulness, your infirmities, shortcomings, and flaws to Christ, and getting a closer, clearer, fuller view of the cross. The all-sufficiency of Christ meets your case. Sweet truth! I ask not how peculiar, how aggravated, how desperate, how discouraging, the state of your soul may be; I hesitate not to affirm that such is Christ, such His love, His compassion, His fulness, His power, your condition of soul comes within the scope of His sufficiency. Christ's merit meets your demerit; Christ's unchangeableness meets

your backslidings ; Christ's grace meets your corruptions ; Christ's blood meets your guiltiness ; Christ's fulness meets your emptiness ; Christ's power meets your impossibilities ; Christ's compassion meets your misery ; Christ's sympathy meets your sorrow ; Christ's intercession covers all your circumstances and wants. "Christ is all and in all."

Oh, it is, it must be *well* with those whose sins are forgiven through Christ, whose persons are accepted in the Beloved, whose God is the Lord, and upon whom His eye of love and delight rests from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. Say not it is *ill* with your soul, and not well, because the Holy Ghost is inserting the plough more deeply into your heart, thus discovering more of its hidden evil, detecting the lurking sin where its existence was not suspected, and discovering the flaw and the failure in the action, the principle, the motive, the end, which the fair surface, self-flattery, or specious reasoning, had concealed.

O say not that it is *ill* with your soul, and not well, because Jesus doth not speak, God does not smile, and prayer is not answered. "*For a small moment,*" says God, "*have I hid myself from thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee.*" In the dreary, lonely, trying path you now tread, trace you not the footsteps of the flock, and yet more distinct and blessed than all, the footprints of the Shepherd of the flock? Be not, then, cast down. The Lord will bring you through this night of weeping into a morning of joy. And your knowledge will be the deeper, and your faith the stronger, and your joy the fuller, and your hope the brighter, and your song the sweeter and the louder for all the painful exercises through which your soul has passed, and with deeper emphasis you shall exclaim—"IT IS WELL."

But these words express the sentiment and feelings of the *chastened soul*. It is the language of faith in trial. Let us trace some of the afflictive circumstances under which the child of God can say, "It is well."

Affliction and poverty are the distinctive features of the saints of God under the new dispensation ; affluence and exemption from great suffering were probably those of the saints of the former economy. The character of the gospel economy is *unique*. It is the dispensation of *suffering*, the economy of the *cross*. The suffering of the old dispensation was more in type, and shadow, and symbol ; that of the new is the great, the dark filling up of the outline of the picture. **THE SON OF GOD SUFFERED—THE SON OF GOD DIED !** And Christianity derives all its efficacy, and the Christian dispensation all its character, and the Christian all his glory, from this single, this wondrous fact. “*Unto you it is given, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe in His name, but also to suffer for His sake.*” “*Whosoever doth not bear His cross, and come after Me, cannot be my disciple.*” Such is the nature of Christ’s religion, and such the terms of His discipleship—suffering and self-denial. By those who are not initiated into the mysteries of

the kingdom of grace this is a truth hard to be understood. To them it is inexplicable how one whose person is loved by God, whose sins Christ has forgiven, whose life appears holy, useful, and honoured, should be the subject of divine correction, and, perhaps, in some instances, should, more than others, seem smitten of God and afflicted. But to those who are students of Christ, who learn at the feet of Jesus, this is no insoluble problem. They understand, in a measure, why the most holy are frequently the most chastened. Ah ! beloved, in the school where this truth is learnt, *all* truth may be learnt—at the feet of Jesus. There is no mystery in revelation that may not be satisfactorily elucidated, no discrepancy in truth that may not be sufficiently explained, no doctrine that may not be understood, or precept that may not be welcomed, sitting in the attitude of a little child at the feet of Christ, the Great Teacher of men. In His light we shall see light. But men turn from the sun and wonder that in the study of divine truth

shadows should fall darkly upon their path. They study the Bible so little beneath the cross with an eye intent upon Christ, from whom all truth emanates, of whom all truth testifies, and to whom all truth leads. Reader, are you a sincere inquirer after the truth? Then listen to the words of Jesus: “I AM THE TRUTH.” You have sought it in the schools, you have sought it in systems, you have sought it in creeds, you have sought it in churches; and many a weary step you have trod in quest of the precious gem, and your heart has sighed and your spirit has panted in vain. Lay aside your philosophy, your reasoning, your cavilling, and receive the gospel of Christ as a learner, not as a teacher; as a sinner, not as a saint; as a humble child, not as a proud philosopher; as one who is really desirous of knowing how he may be saved. What says the Truth himself? *This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.*” The crisis in your life speeds on when all know-

ledge, save the knowledge of Christ loving you, pardoning you as a guilty sinner, saving you as a lost sinner, and reconciling you to God as a rebellious sinner, will prove as unsubstantial as a shadow, as unreal and fleeting as a dream. Oh let this be the one desire and earnest resolve of your soul. "*That I may know Him*"—"Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus"—"*Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace, thereby good shall come unto thee.*"

Such, then, as have learned of Christ can understand why a child of God should be a child of affliction, why "the Lord trieth the righteous." Declarations such as these have a significance of meaning they can well comprehend. "*I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction*"—"It is good for me that I have been afflicted"—"*Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth*"—"As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." But what are the general grounds of this believing

acquiescence in the afflictive dealings of God expressed by the chastened soul? We can but group them in the smallest possible space.

Tracing the affliction, whatever its nature, to God as the First great Cause, faith calmly acquiesces, and says, "*It is well.*" From nothing does the believer find it more difficult to disengage his mind, in the first blow of his affliction, than *second causes*. The reasoning of the bereaved sisters of Bethany finds its corresponding frame of mind in almost every similar case, "*Lord, if Thou hadst been here my brother had not died.*" Ah! that "*if,*" in the first hour of the heart's anguish, what bitter self-accusation does it occasion, what deep aggravation of the wound does it produce. But with second causes the child of God has nothing to do. Second causes are all by the appointment and under the control of the First Cause. They are but the agents God employs, the means which He selects, to accomplish His own eternal purpose. "*Himself hath done*

it," is the voice of His word, and faith responds, "*It is well.*" Rise, then, O child of sorrow, above the circumstances of your calamity—dwelling upon which will but intensify your suffering, prolong your grief, and rob you of comfort—and rest in the Lord, from whom your affliction proceedeth. "*He maketh sore, and bindeth up; He woundeth, and His hands make whole.*" Then shall you indeed exclaim, from the depth of your stricken heart—*It is well!*

The believer, regarding all God's dispensations in the light of needed discipline, cheerfully acquiesces in the wisdom and righteousness of the divine procedure. Discipline by trial is an essential element in the Christian's sanctification and instruction. Our adorable Lord, as man, exemplified this truth in His own personal history. We read that, "*Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered.*" The lesson which Christ learned—to Him a new one—was the lesson of *obedience*—obedience to the will of His Father

in suffering. As the curse dilated before Him, into more perfect and awful proportion, He came to learn more of the evil of sin and more of the difficulties of redemption, and so more deeply the lesson of obedience—doing and suffering the will of God. It was thus our blessed Lord was perfected through suffering. And this, beloved, is the school in which the “many sons,” Christ is bringing to glory learn submission to the Father’s will. The discipline which was becoming in the case of the Head, cannot be without its need and its blessing in the case of the members. There is much—many deep truths of God, and many holy lessons of practical Christianity—to be learned in the pathway trodden by the Saviour, which can be learnt in no other path—the path of afflictive discipline. When bereavement darkens our homes, and funeral following funeral leaves our doorways; when joys are blighted, and hopes are crushed, and hearts are sorrowful, then it is that the most difficult, yet most holy, of all lessons is in-

culcated—submission to the will of God, expressed in the language of the Shunammite, “It is well.” But, oh, how needful and how wholesome this discipline ! Who would be exempted from it that has once plucked and tasted the fruit which clusters so richly on the blossoming rod ? If submission to the divine will is ever learnt, beyond all question it is where Christ learnt it, by the things which we suffer. And, oh, what holy fruit is this—the will of God accomplished in us ! The pathway may be through the furnace, whitened seven-fold with the heat, but if your will has become more pliant with the will of your Heavenly Father, if the Christian character has become purified, and the graces of the Holy Spirit have become strengthened, and a wider and freer scope has been given to faith, and hope, and love, then ought we not to rejoice in tribulation, and exclaim, “ *He hath done all things well* ”? The canker-worm has been busy at the root of your pleasant gourd, the cold east wind has blown rudely over the long-nurtured buds,

and the fell hand of death has laid the cedar low, and in the anguish of your soul you exclaim, "*Is it nothing to you, allye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of His fierce anger*"—but the Son of God drank a deeper and bitterer cup, and trod a more suffering and a gloomier path than you, and yet could say, "*My Father, not my will, but Thine be done,*" and shall you shrink from a training and a discipline through whose courses God led the Elder Brother and High Priest of our profession? "Oh, no!" you reply; "the self-knowledge I have already attained unto has been so needful and so salutary, that I would not that the cup of sorrow had passed my lips untouched. I little thought that I was so unbelieving, until the Lord tried my faith. I little suspected that pride so lurked within, until God made me stoop. I little imagined that I was so impatient, self-willed, and restiff, until God bade me wear the yoke, and wait His will. I little supposed

that my strength was so small until the Lord laid upon me the burden. And little did I suspect that my heart was so idolatrous—its affections so closely entwined around the creature—until my Father asked the surrender. Little did I believe how limited was my knowledge of Christ, how deficient was my acquaintance with divine truth, and how estranged my heart was from true prayer, until the affliction of my God set me upon examining my resources to meet it. Then I discovered how shallow was my experience, and how low and meagre was my Christianity.” Thus when we trace the discipline to its necessity, the rebuke to the sinfulness that occasioned it, the chastisement to the evil it was designed to correct, the meek and lowly heart can say, “*It is well!*”

And when the present and hallowed results of the divine dealings are in a measure realized—when some sheaves of the golden fruit of the precious seed sown in weeping are sickled—the heart awakened to more

prayer, Christ more precious, sin more hated, self more loathed, holiness more endeared, and the soul brought into greater nearness to God—when the suffering Christian reviews the divine supports he has experienced in his affliction, how God encircled him with the everlasting arms, how Christ pillow'd his languid head, how the Holy Ghost comforted and soothed his anguish, by unfolding the sweetness and fulness of the Scriptures, sealing promise upon promise upon his smitten heart, his chastened spirit can exclaim, "*Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word.*" Thou hast broken but to bind up, hast wounded but to heal, hast emptied but to replenish, hast embittered but to sweeten, hast removed one blessing but to bestow another and a greater.

"Thou dost but take my *lamp* away,
To bless me with *eternal day*."

"*Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee.*"

But the place where the clearest view is taken of the present unfathomable dispensations of God, and where their unfolding light and unvailing glory wake the sweetest, loudest response to this truth—" *He hath done all things well*"—is HEAVEN. The glorified saint has closed his pilgrimage; life's dark shadows have melted into endless light; he now looks back upon the desert he traversed, upon the path he trod, upon the river he passed, and as in the full blaze of glory each page unfolds of his wondrous history, testifying to some new recorded instance of the loving kindness and faithfulness of God, the grace, compassion, and sympathy of Jesus, the full heart exclaims, as no angel's lips could utter it—" *It is well!*" The past dealings of God with him in *providence* now appear most illustrious to the glorified mind. The machinery of divine Government, which here seemed so complex and inexplicable, now appears in all its harmony and beauty. Its mysteries are all unravelled, its problems are all solved, its

events are all explained, and the promise of the Master has received its utmost fulfilment, "*What I do thou knowest not now, BUT THOU SHALT KNOW HEREAFTER.*" That dispensation that was enshrouded in such mystery; that event that flung so dark a shadow on the path; that affliction that seemed so conflicting with all our ideas of God's infinite wisdom, truth, and love; that stroke that crushed us to the earth, all now appears but parts of a perfect whole—and every providence in his past history, as it now passes in review, bathed in the liquid light of glory, swells the anthem—**IT IS WELL!**

But when from that elevated position the glorified saint looks back upon all God's *conduct in grace*—electing, redeeming, calling, and preserving him; when he thinks of the righteousness that gave him acceptance, the blood that procured his cleansing, the grace that effected his sanctification, the upholding power that kept him from falling, and that conducted him at last to glory—a sinner, perchance the very chief,

saved by grace—oh, what music do the words awaken through all the bowers of paradise—*He hath done all things well!* In what new and perfect light is every truth of the Bible now placed! All is cleared up. All that perplexed the mind in the doctrines of the revealed word, and all that embarrassed it in the administration of the divine government, gives place to complete satisfaction. “*I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness,*” is the fond anticipation of the believer on earth; that expectation is the full realization of the believer in heaven. The beatific vision has brought his whole soul into the most perfect harmony with God. He is satisfied with the character and perfections of God which now unfold their grandeur without a cloud, and fill the soul without a limit. “*Now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now we know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.*” An angel’s sight and an angel’s knowledge, enkindle an angel’s fervour; and as growing dis-

coveries and endless illustrations of the divine perfections increase with eternity, glory, honour, and thanksgiving to Him who sitteth upon the throne, will be the saint's undying song. He is satisfied, too, with all God's providential dealings with him in the world he has passed. The present is the repose of faith—and faith can say, amidst scenes of perplexity and peril, of obscurity and doubt, *it is well*, trusting in the wisdom and faithfulness of God. And yet how difficult often do we find it to trace God's design, or connect His strange dealings with a wise purpose or a gracious end. We cannot unravel the web. Is it not so, my reader? Let faith look back upon the past of your life, not to revive its painful emotions, but that with steadier wing and bolder flight it may bear you forward. That dark cloud of sorrow that settled upon your fair prospects—that blast of adversity that swept away riches—that stroke of providence that tore from your sight the wife of your youth, or harried the

child of your hopes prematurely and amidst harrowing circumstances to the grave, or that placed the friend of your bosom, the companion of your hours, the sharer of your toils, into darkness—or that came near to your own person and arrested you with disease—you pause and inquire, *why* is it thus? Ah! the full answer you may never have in this world—for faith must have scope—but by and by, if not here, yet from a loftier position and beneath a brighter sky, and with a stronger vision, you shall look back, and know and understand, and admire it all, and *shall be satisfied*. The glorified are satisfied, too, with the conduct of God's grace. If there is often inexplicable mystery in providence, there is yet profounder mystery in grace. Loving Him as God does, yet that He should hide Himself from His child; hating sin, yet allowing its existence, and permitting His children to fall under its influence; leaving them often to endure the fiery darts of

Satan, and to tread dreary paths, cheerless, starless, the sensible presence of the Heavenly Guide withdrawn, and not a voice to break the solemn stillness or to calm the swelling wave—ah! this is trying indeed! But all, ere long, will be satisfactorily explained. Now the glorified see how harmonious, with every principle of infinite holiness and justice, truth and wisdom, was God's scheme of redeeming mercy; and that it was electing love, and sovereign mercy, and free favour, that made him a subject of grace on earth, and an heir of glory in heaven. And as he bends back his glance upon all the way the Lord his God brought him the forty years' travel in the wilderness—traces the ten thousand times ten thousand unfoldings of His love—the wanderings and the restorings; the stumblings and the upholdings; the falls and the upliftings; the love that would not and the power that could not let him go; the faithful rebukes, the gentle dealings, the tender

soothings, the unwearied patience, and the inexhaustible sympathy of Jesus, with what depth of emotion and emphasis of meaning does he exclaim, *I am satisfied—it is well!* The saints are satisfied, too, with the heaven of glory to which they are brought. They wake up in God's likeness. Positively and perfectly *holy*, positively and perfectly *happy*, actually with Christ, and contemplating, with an intellectual and moral perception all unclouded, the glory of God, how completely satisfied is he with the new world of purity and bliss, of light and splendour into which his ransomed spirit sprung. The last earthly passion has died away, the last remnant of corruption is destroyed, the last moan of suffering and sigh of sorrow is hushed in the stillness of the tomb; the corruptible has put on incorruption, the mortal has put on immortality, and the glorified spirit stands among the throng of holy and adoring ones who encircle the throne and swells the universal anthem—
IT IS WELL.

“ This life’s a dream, an empty show;
But the bright world to which I go
Hath joys substantial and sincere;
When shall I wake and find me there?

Believer in Jesus, how animating the hope, and how elevating the prospect before you! Ascend with me to the upper world. Place yourself in imagination as a glorified spirit amidst the splendours of the holy city. To what are you come? To Mount Sion—to the heavenly Jerusalem—to an innumerable company of angels—to the general assembly and church of the first-born—to God the Judge of all—to the spirits of just men made perfect—to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant. Return back to earth! With this blissful vision before you—all so soon to be realized—what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness? How unearthly, how heavenly, how separate from the world, how Christian in principle, how Christ-like in spirit, temper, and conversation. How like Him in our intercourse

with each other—loving, forbearing, and forgiving, gentle, charitable, and kind. How condescending in rank, liberal in wealth, humble in prosperity, submissive in adversity, contented in poverty, devoted and active in the Master's service!

Sorrowing Mother!—“it is well” with the child. The spirit has returned to God who gave it, and now communes with its Creator, of whose greatness, and wisdom, and glory it knows infinitely more than the profoundest philosopher or the holiest divine. It is safer and happier with its Father in heaven than with you on earth. And who can tell from what evil it is taken, and from what bitter anguish you are preserved—anguish greater in his life than now wrings your heart in his death. He has gone where innocence has no snares, where there exists no temptations to beguile, and where no foes invade. Your child may have stolen your heart from Jesus, who did not intend that His precious gift should supplant Himself in your love. It is well with him. And

is it not well with you? The vacant place is occupied with a sympathising Saviour—the stricken heart turns to Him who smote it—and the ensnared and truant affections, severed from the idol they had worshipped, find their way back again to God. It is well that your Heavenly Father has dealt with you thus. It is well that He condescends to instruct you, though it be by chastening, and to heal your heart-wanderings, though it be by suffering. Twice gracious has thy God been to thee—gracious when He loaned the blessing—a little flower to gladden you awhile with its presence, and now to cheer you with its memory—and gracious in taking it away, transplanting it to a holier soil and sunnier skies, beneath whose influence its infantine faculties and young affections have expanded and ripened into more than an angel's intellect and a seraph's love. “It is well with the child.”

Bereaved Christian!—“it is well.” God has smitten, and the stroke has fallen

heavily. The blessing you thought you could least spare, and would be the last to leave you, God thy Father has taken. Why has He done this? To show you what He can be in your extremity. It may be difficult for faith, in the first moments of your calamity, to see how it can be well, or to acknowledge that it is really so. But be still, and wait the issue. Banish from your mind every hard thought of God, stifle in your breast every rebellious feeling, suppress upon your lip every repining word, and bow meekly, submissively, mutely to the sovereign, righteous will of your Father. The blessings, like spring flowers blooming on the grave over which you weep, that will grow out of this affliction, will prove that God never loved you more deeply, was never more intent upon advancing your best interests, never thought more of you, nor cared more for you, than at the moment when His dear hand laid your loved one low. Receive the testimony of one who has tasted, aye, has drank deeply, of the

same cup of grief which your Father God now mingles for you. Let us drink it without a murmur. It is our *Father's* cup. As a father pitieith his children, so does He pity us, e'en while He mingles and presents the draught. It is bitter, but not the bitterness of the curse; it is dark, but not the frown of anger; the cup is brimmed, but not a drop of wrath is there! Oh wondrous *faith* that can look upon the beautiful stem broken; the lovely, promising flower, just unfolding its perfection, smitten; the toils and hopes of years, all, and in a moment, extinguished, and yet can say—" *It is well!*" Go, now, thou precious treasure! God will have my heart. Christ would not I should be satisfied with His gift of love, but that I should be satisfied with His love without the gift. "Thou *only* art my portion, O Lord." The world looks dreary, life has lost a charm, the heart is smitten and withered like grass, some of its dearest earthly affections have gone down into the tomb, but He who recalled the blessing is

greater and dearer than the blessing, and is Himself just the same as when He gave it. Jesus would be glorified by our resting in and cleaving to Him as our portion, even when the flowers of earthly beauty, and the yet more precious fruits of spiritual comfort and consolation wither and depart. Satan would suggest that we have sinned away our blessings and forfeited our comforts, and that, therefore, the Lord is now hiding His face from us, and in anger shutting up His tender mercies. But this is not really so. He is hiding the flowers, but not Himself. In love to them He is transferring them to His garden in heaven, and in love to us He thus seeks to draw us nearer to His heart. He would have us knock at His door and ask for a fresh cluster. We cherish our blessings and rest in our comforts, and live upon our frames and feelings, and lose sight of, and forget Him. He removes them that we might be always coming to Him for more. Oh, matchless love of Jesus!—*it is well.*

“ Stricken, smitten, and afflicted,
 Saviour, to thy cross I cling ;
 Thou hast every blow directed,
 Thou alone canst healing bring.

“ Try me till no dross remaineth ;
 And whate'er the trial be,
 While thy gentle arm sustaineth,
 Closer will I cling to Thee.

“ Cheerfully the stern rod kissing,
 I will hush each murmuring cry ;
 Every doubt and fear dismissing,
 Passive in thine arms will lie.

“ And when through deep seas of sorrow,
 I have gained the heavenly shore,
 Bliss from every wave I'll borrow,
 And for each will love Thee more.”*

Sick one!—“ it is well.” Is it so, can it be? you doubtfully inquire. Yes, it is and must be so, since He who loves you has permitted, nay, has sent this sickness. His wisdom cannot err, His love cannot be unkind. This trying dispensation may appear adverse to your best interests. It has, perhaps, come at a time when you could be

* Mrs. E. C. Judson.

least spared from your domestic duties, the engagements of business, or the work of the Lord. Thus secluded from your family, withdrawn from your wonted employments, or, what may be a yet more painful reflection, exiled from the public ordinances of the Lord's house—those means of grace that have been so precious and profitable to your soul—you marvel how this sickness can be well. Marvel not, since God's ways are not as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts. He works His purposes of mercy and love towards us in a way often directly opposite to all our anticipations and plans. This sickness may appear to you a heavy calamity, the result may prove it an untold blessing. Sanctified by the Spirit's grace, that bed of suffering, that couch of weakness, those wearisome days, and long, sleepless nights, shall teach you truth, and realize to you promises, and bring your soul so near to God, and so endear the Saviour to your heart, as shall constrain you to exclaim—“Lord, it is well!” “Commune with your

own heart upon your bed, and be still." "*Let patience have her perfect work, wanting nothing.*" Be not over anxious as to your recovery. God's time is best. Not one pain, not one moment's sense of weakness more than is needful will God permit. Nor will He keep you upon that bed of suffering, nor a prisoner within that shaded room, one day longer than is necessary to accomplish the good He designs to bestow. Be trustful —be passive—lean upon Jesus, who will make all your bed in your sickness—open your heart to God in inward, silent breathings, and commit yourself, your family, your calling, yea, all your interests entirely to Him, and all will bewell. And suppose this present sickness should be unto *death*—will not that be well? What! not to be released from a body of infirmity and sin? Not to go home, and take possession of your glorious inheritance? Not to go and see Christ in His glory, and be reunited to those who have gone before, and mingle with prophets, and apostles, and martyrs, and be as they are,

perfected in holiness and love? Oh, yes, it will be far better to depart and be with Christ, if He sees fit. Tremble not to cross the flood. Our true Joshua has paved the path with precious stones—the doctrines, truths, and promises of His word—upon which your faith may plant its feet, and so to pass over dry shod into the heavenly Canaan. The bitterness of death is passed to all who believe in Jesus, and “it is well.”

Child of Adversity—“it is well.” Can you respond to this, now that God may have taken from you health, friends, riches, earthly comforts, and creature supports? It must be well, since providence and not accident, God and not man, has done it. But weep not, be not cast down, all is not gone. God is still your God and Father, Christ is still your Friend and Brother, the Spirit is still your Comforter and Guide, the covenant is still your inexhaustible supply, the promises are still left you, and all these losses and trials are working together for your good. Beware of rash steps, of creature

confidence, of distrusting God. Make not flesh your arm, be not too curious to know the Lord's designs, but remember that "*in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.*" God will not leave you in this time of adversity. In Him let your faith be filial, implicit, unwavering. If you honour Him by trusting Him now, He will honour your trust by and by. Give yourself to prayer. You will find it a sweet outlet to your full and burdened heart. All will yet be well. Stand still, and let God solve His own deep problems, and you will then see how much infinite love and wisdom, and faithfulness and goodness was enfolded in this dark distressing calamity. But ere this, in faith and submission, learn to say—*it is well.*

Is it well with your soul, my reader? Are you converted by the Spirit of God? Is your soul saved? This is the only part of your being that is worthy of a moment's serious thought. Everything else in comparison is but as the bubble that floats down

the stream. This busy life will soon cease ; its last thought, and care, and anxiety will yield to the great, the solemn realities of eternity. Are you ready for the result ? Are you in a state of pardon, of justification, of peace with God through Christ ? How is it with your soul ? Will it be well with you in death, well with you after death, well with you at the judgment-seat of Christ ? Have you come to the Lord Jesus as a Saviour, to His blood for cleansing, to His righteousness for acceptance, to His cross for shelter, to Himself for rest ? Have you fled *as a sinner* to Jesus as the *Saviour* ? Look these questions, I beseech you, fairly, fully in the face, and answer them in your own conscience, and as in view of that dread tribunal at whose bar you will soon be cited. What, if you should prosper in temporals, and be lean in spirituals ! What if you should pamper the body and starve the soul ! What if you should gain the world—its riches, its honours, its pleasures—and be yourself through eternity a cast-away ! To

die in your sins, to die without union to Christ, to die irreconciled to God, tremendous will be the consequences ; so dire will be your condition, so fearful and interminable your sufferings from the wrath of a holy and righteous God, it had been good for you never to have been born. The unrighteous will be "*punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power.*"

But there is hope ! Does this page meet the eye of a penitent mourner, one whose heart is smitten with godly grief for sin ? Truly can I say it is well with your soul, if this be so. If the sacrifice you bring to God's altar is that of a broken heart, be it known to you that the sacrifice of a broken heart and of a contrite spirit God will not despise. Despise it ! Oh, no ! It is the precious, holy fruit of His own Spirit in your soul, and in His eye it is too holy, too costly, too dear, to be despised. Bring to Him that broken heart, and Jesus will bind it up, heal and fill it with joy, and

peace, and hope. It was His mission to receive and save sinners—it is His office to receive and save sinners—it is His delight to receive and save *sinners*; and if you will but approach Him, exactly as you are, He will receive and save *you*. “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*”

On one ground only is there a possibility of your rejection. Come with a price in your hand wherewith to purchase salvation—be it your tears, your confessions, your sacraments, or whatever else it may be—and Christ will have no dealings with you. It is as though a sound man should come to be cured of the physician; or, as though a full man should come to sit down at a banquet; or, as though a beggar should offer to purchase at the door the bread he had craved in his hunger. But come to the Lord Jesus empty-handed, broken-hearted, sin-burdened, with no plea but your deep necessity, with no argument but your utter unworthiness, with no price but your insolvency, and Jesus will receive you graciously,

will welcome you freely, and save you eternally. “*And when they had nothing to pay He frankly forgave them both.*”

Christian Professor, is it well with you? Is your soul prosperous? Are you making progress towards heaven, advancing in the divine life, and walking worthy of your high and holy calling? Is Jesus increasingly precious to you, is your heart warm with divine love, and have you the inward testimony—the comfortable, cheering witness of the Spirit—to your interest in Christ, and your adoption into God’s family? We are entering upon a New Year of our earthly pilgrimage; let us commence it with a new setting out for heaven. Begin the year with a renewed application to the atoning blood, with a fresh draft upon the supplies of the covenant of grace, with a fresh coming to the fulness of Jesus, with a closer, clearer, more simple sight of the cross. Do not let us commence the New Year with the *old* stores, but let us repair to our true, spiritual Joseph for a *fresh* impartation of new grace,

new strength, new faith, new love, new courage. Let the old things pass away, and forgetting the things that are behind, let us start anew for glory. It is recorded of the children of Israel, that when they reached the confines of the good land they ceased to eat of the *old* corn, and "*did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.*" In like manner are we invited to live upon the earnest, the foretastes and pledges of the coming glory ; to partake of the new corn, and to press into our cup the first ripe fruits of the new vintage. Let us relinquish the old stores for the new. Let no remembrance of past backslidings, no lingering taint of past sins, no cloud-vailing of past sorrows discourage us from laying all our burdens at the foot of the cross, making it the starting-point of a new and more advancing stage in the glorious race that is before us. Jesus stands prepared to supply every want, to sympathise with every sorrow, to uphold us with His hand, to guide us with His eye, and to conduct us by a right way

safely to heaven. In a little while and we shall behold Him. All things betoken the shaking of the heavens and the earth, when the “Desire of all nations” shall come. The late movements in the East—the present trembling in the valley of dry bones (the Jewish people)—the diffusion of the gospel as a witness to all nations—the daily fulfilment of prophecy—the rapid transit and close intercommunication with all parts of the globe, are striking and significant indices of the great events which are approaching. The *grand event* to which all others point, and of which all are but the herald, is—**THE PERSONAL APPEARING OF THE SON OF MAN.** “*The coming of the Lord draweth nigh.*” In a little while He that shall come will come, and then shall be the rapture of the saints! In view of this illustrious and solemn event, let our attitude be that of holy, watchful, prayerful expectation, “*looking for and hastening unto the coming of the Lord.*” Let brotherly love abound—let charity towards one another increase—let the saints

of different Christian communions band more closely together in the Lord's work—and let all seek to be filled and animated with the lowly, gentle, winning, loving spirit of Christ, the one Lord and Master of His ONE Church.

Saints of the Most High ! over these broken waters of a sinful, sorrowful, toilsome life we shall soon have passed, and standing upon the " sea of glass," with the harp of God in our hand, there shall be reflected from its tranquil bosom the glory, and there shall breathe from every string the praise of our God in having done all things well ! Oh what harmony shall we then see in every discrepancy, what wisdom in every labyrinth, what love in every affliction, what tenderness, gentleness, and forethought in every stroke of His hand, and in every event of His providence ! The mystery of God will be finished, and God will be all in all.

“ Through the love of God our Saviour,
 All will be well.
 Free and changeless is His favour ;
 All, all is well.
 Precious is the blood that healed us,
 Perfect is the grace that sealed us,
 Strong the hand outstretch'd to shield us,
 All must be well.

“ Though we pass through tribulation,
 All, all is well.
 Ours is such a full salvation,
 All must be well.
 Happy still in God confiding,
 Fruitful if in Christ abiding,
 Holy through the Spirit's guiding :
 All, all is well.

“ We expect a bright to-morrow ;
 All, all is well.
 Faith can say in deepest sorrow
 All, all is well.
 On our Father's love relying,
 Jesus every need supplying,
 All in living, all in dying,
 ALL MUST BE WELL.”



ALL THINGS FOR THE BEST.

"And we know that all things work together *for the best* to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."—*Romans* viii. 28.

SUCH is the rendering by Tyndal of a passage which to the children of God has ever been as a fresh and living spring of divine and unfailing consolation. How many a Christian pilgrim, weary and faint in his journey, has paused, drank of it, and passed on his way, like a giant refreshed with new wine. How many an inexplicable problem in providence has it solved—how many a lowering cloud has it pencilled with light—how many a burden has it lightened—how many a sorrow has it soothed—how many a tear has it dried—how many a soul has it bowed in meek submission to the Divine

will, in the history of God's church ! More precious than rubies are these words of the Holy Ghost ! To be divinely assured—assured by Him “ who cannot lie”—that all the events, circumstances, and incidents of my life—that all the arrangements and dispensations of His government, work together for the *best*—that they are designed to promote my greatest good and to secure His highest glory—surely it is enough to bring the heart into perfect and cheerful acquiescence with the most gloomy, adverse, trying, and mysterious event that ever cast its deep, broad shadows on our path !

We have reminded you, beloved reader, in years gone by, that God often leads His children by an “ Untrodden Path”—that, although this were so, it was yet a sweet thought that the believer is “ Going Home”—that, until he should reach the confines of his eternal rest, his “ Times were in God's Hands”—that, by Him who dwelt in the “ Bosom of the Father, the heart of God had been unveiled”—that, with such a reve-

lation of divine love, it was the simple province of faith, in all the dim perspective of the future, "Only to Trust Him!"—and that, if that future developed some overwhelming, crushing affliction, it was the believer's privilege to bow meekly his head, and exclaim, "It is Well!"

We meet you at the opening of another year with a truth not less divine, appropriate, and precious—a truth well calculated to soothe under present circumstances, and to inspire confidence in prospect of the future: "*We know that all things work together for good (for the best) to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.*"

There may occur events in national and in individual history which to our blind reason may appear the very reverse of our well-being. What means that dark cloud settling upon the British dependencies in the East? What that intelligence of woe flashing along the electric wire, the heraldings of a crushing sorrow to many a loving

heart, to many a happy home? Seemeth it not that the providence of God contraveneth the truth of God? My reader, "*It is the glory of God to conceal a thing.*" God, in the administration of His all-wise, all-righteous, all-beneficent government, has night seasons as well as day—seasons of darkness as well as seasons of light—and in both He must be contemplated, studied, and known. As the night reveals glories in the firmament, which the day concealed, so dark dispensations of Divine Providence bring to the believer's eye, as viewed through the telescope of faith, glories in the character and wonders in the government of Jehovah which the milder and brighter displays of Himself had veiled from the eye. Oh, beloved, how scanty were our experience of God—how limited our knowledge of His love, wisdom, and power—how little should we know of Jesus, our best Friend, the Beloved of our souls, did we know Him only in mercy, and not also in judgment—were there no lowering skies, no night of weep-

ing, no shady paths—no rough places, no cloud-tracings—no seasons of lonely sorrow, of pressing want, and of fierce temptation. “*In the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for Thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of Thee.*”

Nor should we overlook the full play and exercise of faith which occurrences, to us dark, discrepant, and mysterious, call into operation. Faith in God is the most precious, wondrous, and fruitful grace of the Holy Ghost in the renewed soul. Its worth is beyond all price. Its possession is cheap at any cost. One saving view of Jesus—one dim vision of the cross—one believing touch of the Saviour—a single grain of this priceless gold—millions of rubies were as nothing to it. Then were its exercise and trial good. And but for its trial how uncertain would it be! Were there no circumstances alarming in the aspect they assume—sombre in the form they wear—rude in the voice they utter—events which threaten our happiness and

well being—which seem to dry our springs, wither our flowers, blight our fruits, and drape life's landscape in gloom—how limited would be the sphere of faith! It is the province of this mighty grace to pierce thick clouds, to scale high walls, to walk in the dark, to pass unhurt through fire, to smile at improbabilities, and to master impossibilities. As the mariner's compass guides the ship, coursing its way over the ocean, as truly and as safely in the starless night as in the meridian day, so faith—the needle of the soul—directs as safely and points the believer in his right course home-wards, as truly, in the gloomiest as in the brightest hour. Oh, how little are we aware of the real blessings that flow to us through believing! God asks of us nothing but—*faith*: for where there is *faith* in the Lord Jesus there is *love*—and where there is *love* there is *obedience*—and where there is *obedience* there is *happiness*—and where there is *happiness*, the soul can even rejoice in tribulation, and sit and sing sweetly

and merrily in adversity, like a bird amidst the boughs whose green foliage the autumnal blast has scattered. Let faith, then, echo to the words of truth, "*All things work together for the best.*"

But, perhaps, my reader asks for something more than naked assertion. "What is the proof that all things are for the best?"

The first evidence is drawn from *what God is Himself*. "*He is good, and doeth good.*" It is His sole prerogative to educe good from seeming evil—to order and overrule all events of an untoward nature and of a threatening aspect for the accomplishment of the most beneficent ends. This He is perpetually doing with reference to His saints. The Spirit of love broods over the chaotic waters, and life's dark landscape appears like a new-born existence. The curse is turned into a blessing—the chrysalis emerges into a beauteous insect—the noxious weed becomes a life-sustaining plant—the discordant notes breathe the sweetest music. Jesus made the water

wine—and God, by the exercise of a like Divinity, is able to make all things work together *for the best*—turning the water of our affliction into the wine of His love. You marvel how this can be. What is impossible with man is more than possible with God. Often in your silent musings over some untoward event in your life, sad in its nature, and threatening in its look, have you asked, “What possible *good* can result from this? It seems utterly opposed to my interests, and hostile to my happiness. It appears an unmixed, unmitigated *evil*.” Be still! Let not thine heart fret against the Lord and against His dealings—all things in your history are for the best—and this affliction, this loss, this calamity, is among the “all things.” Here, then, is the first proof that all things work together for the best. God Himself is good, and God is able to do it.

Another evidence is adduced from the *Atonement of the Lord Jesus*. The extraction of the curse from everything apper-

taining to the child of God converts every thing into a *blessing*. “*There is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel.*” Christ has so completely annihilated the curse by obedience, and has so entirely put away sin by suffering, nothing is left of real, positive evil in the dealings of God with His church. They must be for the best, since the salvation of Jesus has secured the best. Jesus, because His love was so great, did all, endured all, finished all—and it is not only in the heart of God, but it is in the power of God—a power exerted in alliance with every perfection of His being—to cause all events to conspire to promote our present and eternal happiness. I cannot see how God will work it, or when He will accomplish it, but assured that I am His pardoned, adopted child, I can calmly leave the issue of all things in my life with Him ; confident that, however complicated may be the web of His providence, however hostile the attitude, or discouraging the aspect of events, all, *all*

under the government and overruling will of my Heavenly Father are working together for the best. The result, then, of this matter, my God, I leave with Thee."

"Thy ways, O Lord, with wise design,
Are framed upon thy throne above,
And every dark and bending line
Meets in the centre of thy love."

It is in the heart of God to bestow nothing but the best upon His people. "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." What is there of good we need or of evil we dread, which His heart will withhold, or His power cannot avert? He has already bestowed upon you the best, the very best it was in His power to bestow. He has given us His best love—the best Saviour—the best Atonement—the best righteousness—the best hope—the best heaven; and think you that He will not cause the greatest evil that befalls you to issue in the greatest good you can experience—the best bless-

ing, perchance, of your life? Oh, it is in the heart of our Covenant God to lavish every good, all good upon us; to "*withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly.*" Lord, lead us into thy love—thy love infinite, thy love unfathomable, thy love hidden and changeless as thy nature!

The covenant of grace secures the best as the result of all the dispensations of God with His people. In Jesus, our Surety Head, God has made with us a "*covenant, ordered in all things and sure.*" This covenant provides all blessings, secures all good, and has arranged all things, all events, all occurrences, all removals, all losses, all sudden surprisals, for the greatest happiness, the best well-being of the believer in Jesus.

"My God, the covenant of thy love
Abides for ever sure;
And in its matchless grace I feel
My happiness secure."

Let us specify a few particulars illustrative of this precious truth.

Divine chastenings are for the best.—The

punitive dealings of God as much enter into the blessings that spring from our adoption as any positive good. Nothing is healthful, vigorous, or pure apart from *discipline*. The university would be a wreck, the state anarchy, the domestic constitution utter discord, the church of God a ruin, were a wholesome discipline not rigidly and faithfully observed. This applies with equal force to our spiritual relation as the children of God. The wise, loving, holy discipline of God's family is as needful and as salutary as any part of His government. The corrections, therefore, of our Heavenly Father are for the *best*. It may be a heavy stroke that has lighted upon us, but in the sin it has discovered, in the folly it has rebuked, in the tendency to evil it has checked—in the clearer evidence it has given of our divine relationship—the discipline, painful and humiliating though it be, has proved for the best. “*Blessed is the man whom Thou chasteneth, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law.*”

In this same soothing and consolatory light must all *afflictions* be viewed. Why are afflictions for the best? Because they never come but beneath their raven wings they enfold some hidden blessing; embosomed in the sombre cloud there reposes some covenant mercy. Repeated afflictions are repeated blessings. They fall not as lightning on the scathed tree, blasting it yet more; but as the strokes of the sculptor on the marble block, forming it to the image of life and loveliness. Incision may follow incision, stroke may follow stroke, but it is only to mould and fashion the soul of the child more like unto its Heavenly Parent. If this be so, my Lord, proceed with thy chisellings, until thy child, moulded beneath thy hand, becomes more really and more visibly a "*partaker of thy holiness.*"

"Am I in this light to view my bereavement?" Even so. The Lord has smitten and taken away the desire, the joy, the beauty of your eyes with a stroke. A sudden and terrible event, or a long and painful

process has laid the loved treasure low. Stunned, paralyzed, crushed, you dare not, you cannot see how this mournful event, this irreparable loss, this crushing calamity can result in any good to you—can possibly be for the *best*. But wait God's time. What ! if a closer tie now binds you to God—if Christ now comes and takes the vacant place—the Father, the Husband, the Brother, the Friend, the Counsellor, the Shield—if all your future life draws you closer within His embrace—endears Himself by an unthought of, unheard of, unlooked for love, tenderness, and sympathy—say, will not this bereavement, sore and desolate as it is, be for the *best*? It is *best* for those who sleep in Jesus—though a martyr's death were theirs—it is best for you, oh mourner! though the best and dearest is gone, if Jesus comes andmingles His tears with yours, then wipes them all away. Faith may find it difficult to justify the wisdom, the goodness, and the righteousness of our God in the appalling, indescribable,

inconceivable calamity which has robbed England of so many precious sons and daughters, and turned our Eastern dominions into a very aceldama. But hush each rebellious feeling, be still each murmuring thought—dark, terrible, agonizing as these national and domestic bereavements are—“*the Judge of all the earth must do right.*” Be ye assured of this, weeping mourners, “*all things work together for good to them that love God*”—and among them is the heart-rending calamity that has filled the land with weeping, lamentation, and woe.

And has not the truth which we are endeavouring to enforce found confirmation in the recorded histories of the Lord’s people? Events that seemed so untoward and threatening, circumstances that appeared so adverse and obscure, have but resulted in the greatest good—the dark clouds parting and forming a tabernacle for an unclouded sun. All things seemed against Joseph when sold as a slave, and cast into prison.

All things seemed against Jacob when bereaved of one son, and required to resign another, the youngest and dearest—bereavement and famine staring him in the face. All things seemed against Job when God plunged him into the lowest depths of sorrow, suffering, and poverty. All things seemed against Paul and Silas when cast into the jail at Philippi, and when the great apostle of the Gentiles was carried in chains to Rome. All things seemed against Luther when excommunicated by the Papal church; and appearances looked gloomy and untoward when John Bunyan was torn from his pulpit and his church, and flung into Bedford jail. All things seemed to militate against the Church of God when its Great Head was taken lifeless from the cross, and lay three days in the tomb. But, oh no! these very events and circumstances—dark and mysterious though they appeared—were but realizing and working out God's eternal purposes of mercy and thoughts of love towards His servants and His church—all

were working together *for the best*. Take courage, then, beloved reader, God will not make you an exception, but you shall live through all present and all future dark and painful providences to testify, "*He hath done all things well.*"

These pages may possibly be placed quietly by your side when lying upon a bed of sickness. This illness appears to you enshrouded in mystery. In your lonely musings you wonder how it can possibly be for good. You have marvelled that at a time when, perhaps, health seemed so precious a blessing—a vigorous pulse, a cool brain, an active limb seemed so essential—the Lord should interpose and set you aside from your loved employment, or from pressing duties, a disabled, helpless sufferer. Be still, beloved! this sickness is for the *best*, and ere long you shall see and acknowledge it. Your soul needed healing—sickness is God's remedy. Your heart needed withdrawal—sickness is God's agent. Your spirit needed closer converse with Jesus—

sickness is the Lord's mode. Your mind required more time for reflection, for self-examination, for looking into God's Word, and learning the secret of the Lord with His people—sickness is the teacher. Welcome, then, this lone room, this suffering bed, this couch of languor, these sleepless nights and feverish days, as sent in infinite wisdom and love but to work out the *best* blessings thy loving Father, thy covenant God could give thee. If this illness has brought Christ to your side, His left hand under your head, His right hand embracing you, then be sure it is for the *best*.

These pages may come to you at a time of heart-breaking bereavement. The loved one—perhaps the best and loveliest—is laid low; and looking at the event in the consequences it may entail, you fear and tremble, and find it hard to view it even as a mournfully draped blessing. But, be still, bereaved one! “All things work together for the *best* to them that love God”—and this sad bereavement is in the catalogue.

Perhaps you find it hard to say—yet harder still to feel—“*Thy will be done!*” Listen to the experience of one smitten with a sorrow like your own, but sustained, comforted, and sanctified as God is prepared to sustain, comfort, and sanctify you.

“I shall never be happy again,” quivered the pale lips; “earth and sky are alike dark to me, since they laid my only one in the dust.”

“Does religion, then, afford you no consolation?” asked the beloved pastor, solemnly. “Does not the thought that you shall go to him lift this veil from off your spirit?”

“No, no; I know nothing, think of nothing, but that I have lost him—*lost* him. All is a dead blank; my heart is like a stone. Oh, I would give worlds to part with this awful weight! worlds, worlds!”

“And what if I should say that this terrible weight may be cast off; this cold heart be made warm again!”

"Oh tell me how, for I am in despair!" she cried.

"In one year, dear madam," said the venerable man, "my only son, grown to manhood, was drowned; my wife laid in the grave; my daughter taken from me by death, and my own health so prostrated that I could no longer minister in holy things to my people."

"How sad!" cried the young widow, clasping her hands, while her eyes filled. "How did you, how could you bear it?"

"By looking up to my Father, and saying, '*Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*' Is the prayer new to you?"

"Oh, no," murmured the disconsolate one, her pale face bowed upon her hands; "I say it every day, but I never felt it."

The Sabbath day came round, and the young widow, for the first time since her husband's death, went to the house of God. On her way she met the white-haired pastor, and with a gentle, but subdued smile, she said, "I can bear it now."

A light as from heaven beamed on his aged face. "Then you find His strength sufficient?"

"Yes," she answered. "It was a struggle, but as soon as I felt it was *right*, and for the *best*, the load fell off."

And the man of God, as he stood up to address the people, took as his text, the words, "*Thy will be done.*"

These pages may fall under your notice, perhaps, at a time when some dark providence has suddenly arrested you. A reverse of fortune—involving loss of property, a change of social position, the lessening of temporal comfort, the breaking up, it may be, of home itself. How cold and wintry, how desolate and lonely does everything now appear! Will you, can you believe, my dear reader, that God is at this very moment, and by these very circumstances, working out that which is for your *best*! Ah! it is so, doubt it though you may. Does the Lord in His dealings with His people ever recall an in-

ferior good and not replace it with a better? Does He exhaust a spring and not unseal a fountain? Does He create loneliness and not "set the solitary in families?" Be you sure of the truth that this affliction bears a silent message of love, and that it is among the "all things" in your experience that will work together for the best.

God, perhaps, in His inscrutable but all-wise providence may have seen fit to transfer to another and distant part of His vineyard the presence and labours of your loved minister, pastor, and friend. Your eyes no more see your teacher. It is an acutely-felt trial—you hardly know how to bear up under it. The severing of such a tie—to some spiritual and feeling minds the closest and holiest tie upon earth—seems to cast the deepest, darkest shadow upon all your future. It is a mutual sorrow. On the part of the minister the sensibility is keen—keener far than his position would allow him to express. It is impossible to sunder a union of long existence, and of so sacred

and precious associations without a torn and bleeding heart. To tear himself from an affectionate and attached flock can only be done at an expense of feeling which, because words cannot express it, must be borne in lonely, uncomplaining silence. To you the event seemeth like a cloud without the silver lining—rayless, cheerless, hopeless—so dark and calamitous, indeed, that no good can seem possible as a result. Yet, beloved, even this event, which, perhaps, almost more than any other, affects all the future of your personal happiness, is *for the best*. What, if it throws you more directly upon God? What, if it draws you closer to Christ? What, if it render more precious to your heart the Word of God and the mercy seat—the private means of grace—will you not be a gainer, and testify "*All things work together for the best to them that love God;*" and this removal of my beloved pastor is among the "all things." Oh that the Divine Spirit, the Comforter, may draw near and soothe your sad heart by disclosing

more of the tender, loving and sympathizing heart of Jesus, the Chief Shepherd and Bishop of souls. Oh that Christ may fill the vacancy, and raise your thoughts above the present, and unveil to your faith the glorious and certain prospect of the happy meeting, the eternal reunion of pastor and people in heaven. Then, in that world of perfect and endless bliss, "*Thou shalt weep no more : He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry ; when He shall hear it He will answer thee. And though the LORD give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers.*"

" Launched on the tide of heaven's eternal love,
His ark beneath thee, and His light above,
What can'st thou fear?—be still, my soul, be still,
Thy God hath never left thee—never will."

Dear reader, you "love God." "Ah!" you exclaim, "fain would I love Him!" But what is that deep, yearning desire of your soul, but the gentle, tremulous breath-

ing of love itself? It is love panting, love thirsting, love longing, love really, actually loving—and the one divine and glorious Object around whom its feeble tendrils entwine, who attracts to, and concentrates upon, Himself your sincere, hidden affection, is He who is "Love;" and who, because He is essential love, can interpret the significance of a desire, the language of a sigh, the meaning of an uplifted glance of love in His saints. Faint and fluttering, then, as the pulse of divine love in your soul may be, *you* are one in whose history all things are working together for the best. A hidden ember, a solitary spark of love to Christ, glowing in your soul—the gentlest effectual call of the Spirit in your heart—places you in the ranks of the privileged, all the trials, and sorrows, and joys, and hopes of whose personal history God is transmuting into good, and is combining and causing to work together for the best. Oh, comfort your trembling heart with this thought!

It is, perhaps, with you a time of deep

sense of personal sinfulness. It may be your first conviction, the first view, discovery, and knowledge of the deep-seated evil of your heart. All appears to you polluted, vile, condemnatory. You feel yourself a lost, undone, self-ruined sinner. Your past life is all a dark background—your present filled with bitter lamentations, self-reproach, and sorrow—your future unillumined, uncheered with one ray of hope. And yet, beloved reader, even all this is working together in the sovereignty of God's most rich and free grace for your best, for your eternal good. Along this humiliating and dreary path the Shepherd of the flock, who in the “cloudy and dark day” sought you out, is bringing you back to His fold, laying you upon His shoulders, with rejoicing. Ah! yes, that deep conviction of sin is for the best—that mournful review of the past is for the best—that bitter self-abasement is for the best—that thorough conviction of the insufficiency and hopelessness of your own righteousness is for the best—

all, *all* is working together but to bring you to Christ—and Christ will bring you to God—and God will bring you home to heaven. Doubt not for a moment the suitableness of Jesus' atonement, the sufficiency of Jesus' sacrifice, the fulness of Jesus' grace, the ability of Jesus' power, and the willingness of Jesus' heart to receive and save you. His invitation is, "*If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink;*" "*Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.*" His promise is, "*Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out.*" The encouragement is, "*Therefore He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him.*" Oh, precious truth ! Oh, sweet words !

" Depth of mercy ! Can there be
Mercy, Lord, for such as me ? "

Ah, yes ! the fathomless depths of infinite mercy and love are deeper than the lowest depths of your transgressions. Only come to the Saviour in the simplest faith, believing that He is *able* ; or if you cannot

believe that He is able, yet that He is *willing* to receive and save you—pardoning all your sins through His blood, justifying, as an act of free grace, your person through His righteousness, and enrolling your name among those whom He will finally receive into glory—and you shall be saved! Oh! that you could believe but half the love that Jesus bears to poor, penitent, bruised and sorrowing sinners; how He yearns over them—compassionates them—pities them, and stoops to comfort, heal, and save. He loves to impart the oil of joy, to bind up the broken heart, and to lavish the riches of His kindness and grace upon the poor, the contrite, and believing soul. Be assured, then, that

“ If you die with mercy sought,
When you the King have tried,
That were to die, delightful thought!
As sinner never died!”

“ Work together.” What significant words are these! It is the union of opposites, the combination of different properties

in nature that produce such salutary and magnificent results. This is equally true of God's moral chemistry. All the elements of His various and different dispensations are combining and working together to promote the wisest, holiest, and most benevolent ends. The dark shadow is as essential as the brilliant light—the discordant note as the sweetest chord—the bitter ingredient as the sweet. Let us not, then, murmur at our position, nor repine at our trials, nor fret against the Lord, because we are not where, and are not what we desire. All is right! for all things in our personal history are working together for the best. One moment of heaven will explain all, elucidate all, reconcile all. Let us patiently wait and quietly hope for that day—it speeds on and will soon arrive—when shall be fulfilled the Saviour's promise, designed to soothe and quiet the mind under all present mysteries, "*What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.*"

Suffer a few practical conclusions from this subject.

Let God be His own interpreter.—He, and He only, can decipher the dark symbols of His providence in individual history ; leave, then, the solution of this one with Him, and the result will be the best.

“God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.”

Does not your past experience confirm this ? How many an adverse circumstance, how many a severe trial, how many a bitter sorrow, how many a deeply-mysterious event in your past life—that at the time filled your mind with such painful forebodings—has, by a process the most marvellous, yet most certain, worked out your *best* interests and issued in the advancement of your greatest happiness. Then hope and believe that God’s present dealings will issue in a like happy result.

Take no unlawful, unadvisable steps to anticipate the end of a present event. Stand

still, and calmly, confidently wait the result. Rather sever your right hand than put your own signature, or the signature of another, to what is wrong ; rather pluck your tongue from its root than give utterance to that which is false ; rather sink, crushed beneath the load of your calamity, than distrust God and yield to Satan. Adopt, then, no worldly policy, be swayed by no carnal expediency, repair to no human confidence, listen to no sophistical reasoning, catch at no floating straw of creature help—but, in believing prayer and childlike faith, commit your concerns to, and cast yourself upon, God. Oh, dark and inextricable as may appear your present difficulty, He can and He will rescue you. “*Call upon Me in the day of trouble : and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me.*” Oh, be it your incessant prayer, “*Let integrity and uprightness preserve me ; for I wait on Thee.*”

Admire, adore, and glorify the infinite wisdom and power that can overrule the sins, the backslidings, and the errors of a

child of God for the *best*. This is marvellous, this is humbling—but so it is. By them the Lord instructs, abases, and sanctifies. Thus it is that sin-loathing is promoted, self-abhorrence is inspired, the atoning blood is endeared, and Jesus, the Saviour, becomes more precious. This is the most wonderful achievement of God's alchemy, that He should extract an effectual corrective from the deadliest venom—a healing panacea from the most fatal virus—employing our very backslidings, infirmities, follies, mistakes, and sins, to the greater advancement of our personal holiness and happiness. Oh, it is a surprising unfolding of that Divine power, grace, and love, that causeth *all things* in the experience of His people to work together for the *best*! What! shall I presume upon this truth? God forbid! But may it deepen in my soul the conviction—"Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." "*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew in me a right spirit.*"

Entrust, then, all your future lot to God. He may bring you to the border of the sea, and hem you in on every side, and no avenue of escape open to your eye—nevertheless, “*Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.*” He can smite those waters, and make the dark waves you dread to be crystal walls, fencing you on either side : He can suffer your enemies to pursue, and those very waters that were your defence shall be their defeat. The deluge that bore upon its swelling tide the church of God enclosed within the ark, while it proved the salvation of His people, closed in darkness and in death over His foes. So shall it be with you !

And when the hour arrives that separates you from all below—in the midst of life, of labour, and of usefulness—from thoughts unaccomplished, from plans unfinished, from hopes unrealized, from a home so attractive, and from kindred so dear—be ye sure, beloved, that it will be, in the arrangement and appointment of thy

God, the *best* time, and the *best* mode, and for the *best* end. Thy Father will not put thee off with an inferior good, with a common blessing ; He will give thee, in all His givings, the very best that is in His power and in His heart to bestow. The best place in His church on earth, and the best place in the church in heaven, is yours, because you are Christ's, and Christ is God's ! Oh, see how dear and precious you are to the heart of God ! You have no conception how He loves you ! At this very moment He is causing all present, as He will all future, circumstances in your life to work out your *best* welfare and His greatest glory. Will you, then—Oh, I enforce it as a closing exhortation—go forward in your new stage in life, upon your new year's existence, TRUSTING Jesus to order, arrange, and overrule all things in its undeveloped history for your *best* in time, and for your *best* through a long, a blessed, and never-ending eternity ?

Happy, Saviour, would I be,
If I could but trust in Thee ;
Trust Thy wisdom me to guide,
Trust Thy goodness to provide ;
Trust Thy saving love and power,
Trust Thee every day and hour ;
Trust Thee, as the only light,
In the darkest hour of night ;
Trust in sickness, trust in health,
Trust in poverty and wealth ;
Trust in joy, and trust in grief,
Trust Thy promise for relief ;
Trust Thy blood to cleanse my soul,
Trust Thy grace to make me whole ;
Trust Thee living, dying too,
Trust Thee all my journey through ;
Trust Thee till my feet shall be
Planted on the crystal sea ;
Trust Thee, ever-blessed Lamb,
Till I wear the victor's palm ;
Trust Thee till my soul shall be
Wholly swallowed up in Thee.

GO AND TELL JESUS.

“And His disciples came and took up the body and buried it, *and went and told Jesus.*”—*Matt. xiv. 12.*

As if to illustrate the nature and test the efficacy of His great and gracious expedient of saving sinners, it pleased the redeeming God that the first subject of death should be a believer in the Lord Jesus. Scarcely had the righteous Abel laid his bleeding lamb upon the altar—that altar and that lamb all expressive of the truth and radiant with the glory of the person and work of the coming Saviour—ere he was called to seal with his blood the faith in Christ he had professed. But if the first victim he was also the first victor. He fell by death, but he fell a conqueror of death. He lost the victory, but he won the battle.

Thus was the “last enemy” foiled in his very *first* assault upon our race. The point of his lance was then turned, the venom of his sting was then impaired, and, robbed of his prey, he saw in the pale and gory form his shaft had laid low the first one of that glorious race of Confessors, that “noble army of martyrs,” who in all succeeding ages should overcome sin, hell, and death by the blood of the Lamb.

It was on an occasion similar to the death of the first martyr, that the passage suggesting the subject of these pages was written. Falling a sacrifice to his fidelity, as Abel had to his faith, John was now a mangled corpse—the victim of Herod’s sin and cruelty. Taking up the headless body of their master, the disciples of John bore it to the tomb, and then went and poured their tale of woe into the ear, and laid their crushing sorrow upon the heart, of Jesus. “*And His disciples came and took up the body and buried it, AND WENT AND TOLD Jesus.*” It was, perhaps, their first direct

communication with the Saviour. They had known but little of Jesus until now. Another being had engaged their interest and occupied their thoughts. Absorbed in their admiration of the star that heralded its approach, they had scarcely caught sight of the Sun which had just appeared above the horizon. In vain had John, with characteristic lowliness, reminded them that he was not the Messiah, and but His Forerunner. Wedded to their master, they thought of, clung to, and loved only him. John must therefore die—the star paling and disappearing before the deepening splendour of the Divine ascending Orb. All this was the ordering of infinite wisdom and love. The removal of John was necessary to make his disciples better acquainted with Jesus. They had heard of Him, had seen Him, and in a measure believed in Him; but they never fully knew or loved Him until now that profound grief brought them to His feet. What a divine Saviour, what a loving Friend, what a sympathizing Bro-

ther Jesus was—how truly human in His affinities, compassionate in His heart, gentle in His spirit—they had no adequate conception until the surge of sorrow flung them upon His sympathy. Ah! how they clung to Jesus now! Owning no other master, seeking no other friend, repairing to no other asylum in their lonely grief, "*they went and told Jesus.*" Favoured disciples! honoured men! Oh how many now hymning their praises in heaven, or still watering their couch with tears on earth, will alike testify that until God smote the earthly idol, or broke the human staff, or dried up the creature spring, Jesus was to them an unknown Saviour and Friend? Blessed, thrice blessed sorrow that leads us to Jesus! That sorrow, dark, deep, though it be, will wake the harp of the glorified to heaven's sweetest melody. The bitterest grief of the saint on earth will issue in the sweetest joy of the glorified in heaven—because that grief, sanctified by the Spirit, brought the heart into a closer alliance and sympathy

with Him who was emphatically a “man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.”

We know so much of divine truth, my reader, as we have in a measure a personal experience of it in our souls. The mere speculatist and notionalist in religion is as unsatisfactory and unprofitable as the mere theorist and disclaimer in science. For all practical purposes both are but cyphers. The character and the degree of our spiritual knowledge begins and terminates in our knowledge of Christ. *Christ* is the test of its reality, the measure of its depth, and the source of its growth. If you are advancing in an experimental, sanctifying acquaintance with the Lord Jesus, you are advancing in that knowledge which Paul thus estimates, “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.” Dear reader, let the chief object of your study be to know the Lord Jesus. It may be in the region of your sinfulness, emptiness, weakness, and foolishness that you learn Him—nevertheless,

however humiliating the school, slow the progress, and limited the attainment, count every fresh step you make in a personal acquaintance with the Lord Jesus as a nobler triumph, and as bringing you into the possession of more real wealth than were the whole arcana of human knowledge and science mastered, and its untold treasures poured at your feet. When adversity comes—when death approaches—when eternity unveils—oh, how indescribably valuable, how inconceivably precious will then be *one* faith's touch, *one* faith's glimpse of a crucified and risen Saviour! All other attainments then vanish, and the only knowledge that abides, soothes, and comforts, is a heartfelt acquaintance with the sublimest fact of the gospel, that "*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.*" Oh, whatever other studies may engage your thoughts, forget not, as you value your eternal destiny, to study the Lord Jesus Christ.

The subject which we must keep prominently before us is—*intercourse with Jesus.*

That there may exist a serious defect in the experience of many Christians touching this point, we solemnly believe. There is in the walk of many so wide a chasm between Jesus and their personal and confidential fellowship, as to leave upon the mind the conviction that they have no dealings with Jesus at all ! Hence the distressing doubts, the timid fears, the obscure evidences, the beclouded hopes, that shade the lustre, impair the vigour, and render dubious the religion of so many. The secret is, *they have so little to do with Jesus !* and, as a natural result, Jesus, in the bestowment of His favours, in the manifestations of Himself, in the breathings of His love, has so little to do with them ! Oh, how sad that such distance and coldness should ever exist between Christ and a soul redeemed with His most precious blood ! What an evidence of the fallen condition of our humanity, and of its but partial sanctification even in its renewed state.

We propose, in the further unfolding of

this interesting subject, to state the *grounds* upon which the believer is warranted to go and tell Jesus—the *occasions* on which he is privileged to go and tell Jesus—and the *blessings* that will flow from his going and telling Jesus.

The first springs from what Jesus is *Himself*. The very fact that He whom we approach—the Being, the Saviour, the Friend with whom this close and constant intercourse is maintained—is JESUS, forms our highest encouragement—our divinest warrant. It is not every great person who is at all times accessible. The official barriers which surround, or the austere address which marks him, may interdict and discourage all free and confidential approach. It is not so with Jesus. Infinitely great though He is—for He is the maker of all beings and worlds—there is not a being in the universe so accessible as Jesus. We approach Him, and we find Him—sin only excepted—a being just like ourselves. His divine nature is clad with the human—

His circumstances are human—His love is human—His sympathy is human—His compassion is human—His smile is human—His trials, temptations, sufferings, and sorrows are human; all are so human that there is not a petition with which we approach, growing out of our suffering *humanity*, that challenges not a hearing, that awakens not a response. Let us add a few particulars. Do we go to Him burdened?—we are in the presence of Him who bore the mighty weight of sin? Do we go to Him in sorrow?—we are in the presence of Him who was acquainted with grief. Do we go to Him in temptation?—we are in the presence of Him who was tempted in all points like as we are. Carry we to His feet our adversities, poverty, want?—we are holding audience with Him who, when He sojourned on earth, was poor, homeless, and unbefriended—who subsisted by charity, and had not where to lay His head. And, then, there is another encouragement to our approach growing out of His *official relations*—they

are all in our favour. His prophetic office—His priesthood—His royal character, all have a relation to our varied need. Exalted as His position is, each separate office that He fills warrants and invites our approach. And, as if to crown the encouragements accumulating around our access to Jesus, there are His own personal attractions—all-inviting and irresistible. Every thing in the *person* of Jesus encourages our advance. Does glory charm us—does beauty attract us—does love win us—does gentleness subdue us—does sympathy soothe us—does faithfulness inspire confidence?—then, all this is in Jesus, and all invites us to draw near. He is the “altogether lovely,” and if our minds can appreciate the grand, and our hearts are sensible of the tender—if they feel the power of that which is superlatively great and exquisitely lovely, then we shall need no persuasion to arise and go and tell Jesus every emotion of our souls, and every circumstance of our history. Take all that is tender in love—all that is faithful

in friendship—all that is wise in counsel—all that is long-suffering in patience, all that is balmy, soothing, and healing in the deepest sympathy—and its embodiment, its impersonation is—JESUS. Can we, then, be insensible to all this personal attraction and hesitate repairing to His feet—telling Him all? In addition to what Jesus is in Himself, there is the encouragement to repair to Him growing out of the *covenant relations* He sustains to His people. Apart from His ever-loving heart, kindly disposition, and sympathizing nature, Jesus is your Brother—your Friend—your Goel—next of kin. As a Brother He knows the need of His brethren in adversity—as a Friend He showeth Himself friendly—and as next of kin, He has redeemed your soul, and bought back your lapsed inheritance. Nay, more—He is your Advocate in heaven, your Intercessor at the right hand of God, your Representative, having ascended up on high to take possession of heaven on your behalf, and to prepare a place for you.

Upon His heart He wears your name—a precious pearl in the priestly breastplate. And there is not a moment of time—nor an event of life—nor a circumstance of daily history—nor a mental or spiritual emotion in which you are not borne upon the love and remembered in the ceaseless intercession of Christ. Is not this enough? What more, to win you to His feet in the all endearing confidence of one who delights in everything to go and tell Jesus? Is there another Being in the universe you can approach with such perfect repose of mind, with such full assurance of heart, with an unveiling of every thought, emotion, and feeling, so full, unreserved, and confiding? No! not one!

The mediatorial work of the Lord Jesus constitutes another and assured ground of our approach. The full, complete, and free salvation which He by His obedience and death has accomplished for sinners, anticipates every objection and answers every argument growing out of our personal and

deep unworthiness. Nothing can withstand this plea. When we enter into His presence—be it as a sinner confessing guilt—be it as a penitent supplicating pardon—be it as a mourner unveiling sorrow—be it as needy asking grace—or, be it as a recipient of mercy offering the sacrifice of praise—we stand upon the basis of an Atonement which meets our case in its most peculiar form. It is utterly impossible that we can be repulsed. We approach Jesus *by Jesus!* We “take hold of His strength,” and a rejection of our suit must involve a rejection of Himself. We draw near by the way of His cross. We penetrate into His loving heart through His pierced side. His wounds are our “door of hope.” We plead His own merits—bathe in His own blood—enfold us in His own righteousness—and the one name that breathes from our lips in its purest fragrance and sweetest music is, His own!—that “name which is above every name.” Can He deny us? Will He reject us? Impossible! How shall we more

strongly put the case? What more can we add to annihilate all your doubt and fear touching your reception, if you but arise and come to Jesus? Tell me after this statement—justified and borne out by every sentence of revealed truth—who shall dare interpose or come between your soul and Christ? What echoes of the “law’s loud thunder”—what lightning gleams of justice—what profound sense of sinfulness—what aggravated departures—shall presume to interdict your approach to the Saviour! The cross of Calvary clasped within the arms of faith, you may challenge the universe to forbid your approach to Jesus—every foe shall turn pale and shrink away. No sin, no curse, no Satan can stand beneath the sacred, solemn shadow of that cross where—impaled, suffering, dying—hung the incarnate God. Sooner at the bidding of a mortal shall the laws of nature stand still and this universe cease to be—sooner shall Christ vacate His throne of glory, and God resign the government of all worlds and of

all beings, than shall a poor penitent, humble, supplicating soul enter into the presence of Jesus, pleading His own infinite merits and most precious blood, be chilled by coldness, be awed by a frown, or be rejected with disdain. Once more, believing reader, would we remind you that Jesus your Surety Head has done all for you, and has left you nothing to do but go and tell Him all. He has paid all your great debt—annihilated all your innumerable sins—exhausted every particle of your tremendous curse—and is now set down at the right hand of God to secure by His intercession, and to administer by His government, the untold blessings purchased by His blood—can you, then, hesitate and demur? Approach Him, and with the gentlest pressure of faith, touch the spring of His heart's love, and every door flies open to welcome you.

In addition to all this, we have to blend the thought of the close and sacred *relationship* which binds you to Jesus, on the ground of which you are emboldened to approach

and tell Him all. As a believer, you are one of the countless number given by the Father to Jesus. You are one of His sheep—His brother—His friend. To receive you with indifference, or to repulse you with scorn, would be to trample upon Himself—for we are His brethren, “bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh.” In us, too, He beholds His Father’s image restored—His own righteousness imputed—and our bodies living temples of the Holy Ghost. When the eye of King Ahasuerus lighted upon Esther, robed and jewelled with royal splendour, her person found grace in his sight, and he bade her approach. With a complacency and delight infinitely transcending this does Jesus contemplate the believer as he enters into the divine presence, comely with His comeliness put upon him. Extending the symbol of welcome, He invites your approach; His heart, responsive to your petition, is prepared, and His power, commensurate with your case, is “able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we

ask or think." O royal highway of access! Opened by the blood and kept open by the intercession of Christ, the much incense of whose merit ascendeth up moment by moment before the throne—there is not a thought, a feeling, or a circumstance, with which you may not go and tell Jesus.

" Just as I am—Thy love unknown
Hath broken every barrier down,
Now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come."

Let me remind you, in vindication of the glory of Immanuel, that going and telling Jesus, implies on His part no ignorance of, or indifference to your case. He who redeemed us is God—"God manifest in the flesh." All persons, all things, all events are known to Him from the end to the beginning. When, therefore, you stand in the presence chamber of Jesus you prefer no request, breathe into His ear no sorrow, unveil to His eye no infirmity, with which in all its most minute detail He was not

already infinitely better acquainted than yourself. Long ere the sadness had shaded your brow, or a tear had dimmed your eye, or the burden had pressed your spirit, or the perplexity had woven its web around your path, or the archer had bent his bow and winged his shaft—Jesus knew it all—had appointed it all—had anticipated it all. It was no surprise to Him! Precious truth! Christ had entwined my perplexity with His thoughts, had wrapped my grief around His heart, had provided a pavilion for my safety ere a pebble had paved, or a cloud had shaded, or a whisper of the storm had breathed over my path. “O Lord, thou knowest my down sitting and mine uprising; thou understandest my thoughts afar off, thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.” Satisfied with such a fact, cheered by such a truth, animated by such a thought, you may unhesitatingly advance into the unknown history of another year; firm in the belief that Jesus will be faithful in fulfilling

the promise, “ I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known ; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them and not forsake them.”

Let me now briefly trace a few of the many occasions in which you are invited to avail yourself of this privilege.

Are you burdened with a sense of sin?— Go and tell Jesus. There is no burden that mortal ever bore like this ! Feel you this weight ? Then there is spiritual sensibility, a holy consciousness, a divine life in your soul. This is not the mark of an unconverted nature. The corpse recoils not from its own corruption—nor is the rock sensible of its own weight. You feel yourself a sinner—your spirit is contrite for sin—your whole soul is bowed in the dust of self-abhorrence for sin. Then, my reader, there is life, spiritual, divine, deathless life in your soul—and you are just the one *to go and tell*

Jesus. To whom can you repair with that burden—to whom confess that sin—to whom unveil that guilt but—Jesus? As a sinner you need a Saviour—Jesus is your Saviour. As guilty, you desire to know how God can pardon, justify, and accept you—Jesus, “the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of His person,” is prepared to reconcile you to God, and thus bring you into perfect peace. “Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Appointed by God, Jesus is the infinite burden-bearer of our race. “Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities.” That burden you feel, Jesus bore—for that sin you mourn, Jesus suffered—for that iniquity you acknowledge, Jesus bled—for that guilt, beneath which you tremble, Jesus died. Go, then, and tell Jesus all your sin. To whom can you tell but to Him? He “came into the world to save sinners.” “Christ died for the un-

godly." His "blood cleanseth from *all* sin." His "name is JESUS because He saves." To Him confess all your sin. Beneath His cross, watering His feet with tears of penitence, acknowledge your transgressions—unveil your every sin. He knows it all, yet would have you tell Him all—withholding, veiling, extenuating nothing. Only go and tell Jesus *what* a sinner you are, and that you are emboldened thus to come because He has revealed Himself as *such* a Saviour; that it is His pardoning mercy—His boundless love—His gracious invitation—His tender, compassionate heart that never yet rejected a seeking sinner, that warrants your coming, that draws and woos you to His feet. Oh, if instead of brooding over your unworthiness—magnifying your sins and lessening His most free grace to sinners—you will but arise and go and tell Jesus, the song of the pardoned would soon burst in the sweetest melody from your lips. Only go to Jesus—

“ With all your sins against your God,
 All your sins against His laws,
All your sins against His blood,
 All your sins against His cause—
Sins as boundless as the sea!—
And hide them in Gethsemane! ”

Go and tell Jesus your backslidings. “ My people are bent to backsliding from me,” is the mournful language of God. “ Our backslidings are many,” is the penitential acknowledgment of the Church. Backsliding, as the simple definition of the word indicates, is a *going back*. “ They have gone backward and not forward,” says the Lord. How constantly do we recede in the ways of the Lord Jesus. And if, through restraining grace, there are no outbreaks of sin, there yet may be the secret declension of the soul, the hidden backsliding of the heart, all concealed from human eye, yet “ open to the eye of Him with whom we have to do.” Oh, how little *vital* religion, how little of the anointing of the Holy Ghost, of the power of real godliness, is there in the souls of many who yet at the

Lord's table solemnly profess themselves His ! Perhaps, my reader, you are awakened to a sense of your backsliding from the Lord. Startled by the discovery, alarmed at the symptoms, deplored the consequences, you exclaim, "Oh, that it were with me as in days that are past, when the candle of the Lord shone round about me." You think of the "love of your espousals"—of your "song in the days of your youth, in the day when you came up out of the land of Egypt"—of the "green pastures and the still waters," and your heart dies within you. Be it so—be it that you have wandered far from God, and that you have fallen by your iniquity—that you have pierced afresh the bosom of that Saviour that has so often pillow'd your head in weakness and grief—yet go and tell Jesus ! There is not in the universe a being who can so understand and sympathize with your case as He. Tell Him how your affections have strayed—how your love has chilled—how the spirit of prayer has waned

in your soul, and what ascendancy the world, the creature, and self have obtained in your mind. Take with you words and turn to the Lord—say unto Him, “Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously.”

In this connection of our remarks, we would venture upon an observation which relates closely to the happy and holy walk of the child of God. How many a believer in Jesus pursues his Christian course with a sad countenance, the reflection of a yet sadder heart, from the consciousness of the indwelling evil of his nature perpetually exhibiting itself in flaws, and failure, and dereliction, to which the eye of human affection is blind, but which to his own inspection are real, palpable, and aggravated—not the less humiliating and abhorrent because unknown and unsuspected by all but himself. The remedy, what is it? *Going and telling Jesus!* Oh, if there be one view of this privilege more precious, endearing, and sacred than another, it is the liberty of admitting Jesus to the deepest confidence of the heart—

of unveiling to Him thoughts, imaginations, and emotions which no inducement could persuade us to reveal to our most dear and intimate friend. Bending beneath the cross, the eye reposing in faith upon the Crucified, there is no heart wandering, no mental emotion, no secret so profound, no sorrow so delicate, no perplexity so great, no guilt so aggravated, which the lowly, penitent heart may not fully and freely tell Jesus. It is the oversight of this truth that produces so much solitary grief in the minds of many of the Lord's people. They forget *what a Friend, what a Brother, what a Confidant, what a Saviour they have in Jesus.* They refuse to go and tell Him all; and thus brooding over their failures and sins, nursing in loneliness their trials and sorrows, their "sore runneth in the night, and their soul refuseth to be comforted."

As a child of the light walking in darkness—go and tell Jesus. The path of the believer, though it be the only sunny path in life, is often shaded and dreary. There

are spiritual despondencies and mental depressions peculiar to the divine life of the Christian. If the “Sun of Righteousness” had His periods of obscurcation, His temporary eclipse when His whole soul was enshrouded in deep gloom, it is no great marvel that along a similarly shaded path His disciples should travel. The cloud that envelops you may be so dense as to obscure every star and to extinguish every ray. You cannot see Jesus—you cannot descry a single promise upon which you can rest your soul—not a word of Jesus from which you can extract comfort or gather hope. All means fail, and every spring of consolation is dried, and you have no evidence of your interest in the Saviour, of your adoption into His family, of your title to glory—and you exclaim, “My God, my Father! why hast Thou forsaken me?” But, hush that murmur! God has not forsaken you. “O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me,” is His assuring declaration. What is your course? *Go and tell*

Jesus ! If in the universe there is one who can sympathize with this spiritual darkness it is He. Turn you in faith to the full sun-shine of this Divine Orb. In Christ's light you shall see light upon all the hidden riches and glory of the kingdom of God within you. Sinful though you are, your soul, renewed and inhabited by the Holy Ghost, presents the pencillings and enshrines the gems of a Divine Artist, the beauty, grandeur, and costliness of which are hidden until Jesus shines upon it. It is the light flowing from the Sun of Righteousness that alone can make manifest the work of the Holy Spirit in our souls. This is one mode by which the Spirit "bears witness with our spirit that we are the sons of God." He reveals Jesus to the believer. Opening, as it were, the casement, uplifting the window, He admits the light that streams from a Divine Sun, and the soul thus illumined, unveils the wealth and sparkles with the glories that are garnered there—the restored image of God, and the

precious, costly, imperishable graces of the Holy Ghost. Go, then, my reader, and tell Jesus the darkness that broods around you and that conceals all this glory. Ask Him to arise upon your soul with healing in His wings. One ray darting from that Sun—and how soon will that long, dreary “night of weeping” be succeeded by the bright “morning of joy.” “He that followeth me,” says the Saviour, “shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”

I will suppose you, my reader, to be a *tempted soul*—for *temptation* is an essential element in the spiritual discipline of the child of God. “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man.” “Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.” Through this furnace, more or less heated, all the followers of Jesus pass—they could not be like Him were it not so. He was tempted like as we are that He might know how to sympathize with us, and we

are tempted that we might fly to the asylum of that sympathy. Perhaps you are tempted to distrust God—to question the Saviour's love to you—to oppose the divine will—to fret, and murmur, and repine at the dealings of your heavenly Father—to doubt the truth of the Bible—to look upon your professed Christianity as a fiction, and upon all your past experience as a lie. Poor tempted soul what are you to do? Whither repair? Already you are prepared to succumb to the foe. You have no heart to resist—no skill to fence—no power to vanquish. Satan is too subtle, experienced, and vigilant in this war to be easily foiled or soon overcome. Already your wounded conscience, confidence, and peace, testify to the perseverance and precision with which his "fiery darts" have been winged. Whither, then, will you look? *Go and tell Jesus.* To whom can you more fitly repair for succour in temptation than to the tempted One? Lay all your case before Him. Tell Him how your faith trembles, how your courage fails,

how your heart dies within you, and how ready you are to cast away your confidence, and to part with the anchor of your hope. Oh, methinks, that in a moment—the scene of His own long, weary temptation in the wilderness still vivid in His remembrance—He will open every recess of His loving, gracious, sympathizing heart, and draw you within the blest pavilion until the storm be past. Tempted ones are peculiarly precious to Jesus. It is His own temptation over again, in the persons of His members. And if there be a niche in His heart deeper, warmer, or more sacred than another, it is where He hides and shelters His Satan and sin-tempted disciples.

Go and tell Jesus your trials. To whom, as a *tried* Christian, but to Jesus can you go? Oppressed and sorrowful as our humanity is, there is wanting in each and all the tender, disciplined feeling that exactly harmonizes with our own chastened and pensive spirit. We take our sorrow even to a sorrowing believer, and we find his

heart so charged with his own personal trial, his mind so perplexed with his own anxieties, or his spirit so bowed under its own concealed dejection, that we shrink from adding one drop to his brimmed cup by pouring into his sad heart the sadness of our own. He is silent of his own grief, but that silence, oh how expressive !

But there is One to whom you may go, whose sorrows now are all over, and who is prepared to make yours His own. You are tried in your spirit—tried in your principles —tried in your faith—tried in your worldly calling—tried in your spiritual history—tried in your domestic circumstances—tried in those near and dear to you—whither, son, daughter of trial, can you turn but to Jesus ? Have you pondered this sacred and precious privilege ? Has it ever bethought you to arise in your grief and go and tell Jesus ? He was, as you are, a child of sorrow—a man of grief. Smitten, wounded, traduced, belied, foully accused, bruised, and heart-broken—and is fitted, as no other being in

the universe is, to listen to the story of your trial, succour, soothe, and sanctify it.

These pages will, doubtless, find their way within the home of the—*bereaved*. We refer to this sorrow with the most profound awe—we touch it with a shrinking hand. It seems almost too sacred for human sympathy to approach. But there is One, and only one, who can approach it—One, and only one, who can enter into and understand it—One, and only one, who can soothe it. It is Jesus ! Contemplate Him in the bereaved home of Bethany ! Martha and Mary are mourners. Lazarus their brother is dead. Jesus, their brother's Friend and theirs, is come—but He has come too late ! “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” No ! not too late ! It was just the moment that Jesus should come. He timed His visit of sympathy and help with their grief and need. Beloved, Jesus never approaches you a moment sooner, or a moment later, than your case demands. He *will* come—but it will be at the *very*

instant that you most need Him. There shall be more than an angel's chime of His sympathy with your sorrow—the most perfect and exquisite blending. If He come a moment too soon, your grief would not be matured enough for His sympathy—if a moment too late, that grief might have crushed you. Now, mark the thoughtfulness and skill, the delicacy and sympathy of Jesus. All is inscribed in one brief but expressive sentence, “JESUS WEPT!” To this weeping Jesus go! You return to the house of mourning from the grave where repose the ashes of one once animated and glowing with a spirit that blended with your own—you seem to have entombed a second self—all that gave existence an object, or life its charm. But rise, and go to Jesus. Tell Him what a wreck your heart is—what a blank life seems—and what wintry gloom enshrouds all the landscape of human existence. Tell Him how mysterious to your view seems the event—how heavy falls the blow—what hard, dark, rebellious thoughts

of God now haunt your perturbed mind. Lay your grief upon Jesus' breast. Think not that you are alone in your sorrow—that there is not in this wide, wide world, one who can appreciate your loss, or enter into all the peculiar features of your afflictions, the delicate shadings of your sadness—Jesus can—and Jesus only. The vacancy, too, death has made, in your love and friendship, whatever be the relation, Jesus can fill. Ah, there is not a relation, many and varied though they are, both of domestic and social life, which the Son of God has not assumed, so, that when these human ties are sundered by death, Jesus stands prepared to reknit, replace, and restore them, by Himself occupying the vacancy. In the rupture of the parental bond—He is a *Father*; of the filial—He is a *Son*; of the conjugal—He is a *Husband*; of the fraternal—He is a *Brother*; of friendship—He is a *Friend*. Thus, in every condition of human life, whatever the peculiarity of its bond, the speciality of its sorrow, or the desolation it produces, Jesus

avows His aptitude and readiness to meet and sympathize with it. Go, then, bereaved mourner, and present your claim to a new-born relation, it may be, to the Incarnate Son of God.

It is possible that you are entangled within the meshes of a present *difficulty*, to the unravelment of which no clue presents itself, and from which there appears no way of escape. Human ingenuity is baffled, creature strength fails, all earthly means are exhausted, and you are at your wits' end. Behold your remedy—how near, how simple—*Go and tell Jesus*. Take your difficulty and spread it before the Lord. Your appeal to His compassion and your believing reliance upon His promise will secure on your behalf infinite wisdom and omnipotent strength. Listen to the divine declaration, simple faith in which will raise you above your circumstances, “Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: *is anything too hard for me?*” Then, what is your present entanglement, great though it be, to Him,

"with whom nothing is impossible?" In a moment, and by a way transcending all your thoughts and conceptions, He can "pluck your feet out of the net," and bring you into a "large place where there is no straitness." Pore not despairingly over your obstacles, faint not under your adversity, sit not down, stunned and paralyzed, upon the stone of difficulty, asking, "who will roll it away?"—here is your effectual remedy, adopt it in faith and you shall be delivered—*Go and tell Jesus.* Enlist Him on your side, retain Him as your Counsellor, honour Him by committing your case to His skill, power, and willingness, and He will guide you through all the intricacies of your position, making the rough path smooth and the crooked path straight. Jesus has power to rescue you from all your entanglements. He can level the mountain, lift up the valley, roll aside the rock, and clear your way to an equitable, honourable, and happy adjustment of all your worldly difficulties. Only make use of Him:

Only honour Him. Only confide in Him. Only call upon Him. All hearts are in His hand, all resources are at His command, all agencies are at His disposal—nothing is impossible with Jesus but to *deny Himself*—this He *cannot* do. Then, “be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.”

What more shall we say? We will sum up all in a few words—Go and tell Jesus *everything*. You have much to disclose—tell Him all. Tell Him of the world’s woundings, of the saints’ smitings, of the spirit’s tremblings, and of the heart’s anguish. Tell Him your low frames, your mental dependencies, your gloomy fears, beclouded evidences, and veiled hope. Tell Him your bodily infirmities—your waning health, failing vigour, progressive disease—the pain, the lassitude, the nervousness, the weary couch, the sleepless pillow, which no one knows but Him. Tell Him of your dread of death, how you recoil from dying, and

how dark and rayless appears the body's last resting-place. Tell Him how all beyond it looks so dreary, starless, hopeless. Tell Him you fear you do not know Him, love Him, believe in Him. Tell Him that there is not a being in the universe—none in heaven or on earth—whom you desire as Himself. Tell Him all the temptations, the difficulties, the hidden trials and sorrows of your path—tell, oh, tell Him *all!* There is nothing that you may not in the confidence of love and in the simplicity of faith tell Jesus—no temporal want—no spiritual sorrow. Casting *all* your care upon Him, for He careth for you.” “Ye people, pour out your heart before Him!” Tell Him your desolateness as a widow—your friendlessness as an orphan—your sadness and solitude as one whose heart is overwhelmed within you. Go, and lose yourself in the love of Jesus—hide you in the wounds of Jesus—wash you in the blood of Jesus—replenish you from the fulness of Jesus, and recline upon the bosom of Jesus. Think

not this a weak, sentimental Christianity to which we are urging you. We know no other than this—no other which so appeals to the intellect, as to the most sacred feelings and affections of the heart. This telling Jesus everything in our individual history—this recognition of His government in all our ways, and this reliance upon His power and love in all our circumstances—is the legitimate employment of a faith at once the sublimest exercise of the mind as it is the loveliest and holiest impulse of the heart. Here is a faith that recedes from the objects of sense, and “ beholds Him that is invisible ;” that quits the region of illusions and shadows, and entwines itself with infinite realities ; that carries all the interests and relations, responsibilities and accountabilities of time into the solemn, awful, and unalterable decision of eternity. In urging you, Christian reader, to the exercise of a privilege of personal contact and close transaction with Jesus, we have but endeavoured to simplify a principle, in its

application to all the minutiae of life, the divinest, loftiest, and sublimest that can possibly task the powers of the human soul. All the splendour of human philosophy, science, and prowess, pales before the moral grandeur which gathers, like a halo, around a mortal man reposing at the feet of the Incarnate God, unveiling his whole soul in all the child-like confidence of a faith that grasps Jehovah. At this focal point must meet the profound philosopher and the untutored peasant ; the matured man and the little child—all taught, counselled, and supplied at the feet of Jesus.

It only remains that we briefly glance at the *sanctifying influence* this operation of faith must naturally exert.

The first result to which we refer is, *the close intimacy with Christ* which the habit cultivates. Human society will illustrate this. It is close intercourse with our fellow-beings that removes ignorance, dissolves prejudice, and unseals in our hearts the hidden springs of confidence, affection, and

sympathy. How many of the Lord's people stand aloof from each other's society simply from not knowing one another. Did believers in the Lord Jesus more frequently meet in council, in service, in communion, how soon and entirely would the coldness, the party-spirit, the jealousies, the erroneous impressions vanish, which now, alas ! divide the body of Christ, all whose members are "members one of another." Knowing each other better, they would love each other more, there would be more ready concession made to the freedom of judgment and the claims of conscience. The clergy of the various sections of the Christian Church stand too wide apart from each other simply because they do not know each other. And if the shepherds are thus sundered, it is no marvel that the sheep are divided ! The Church of Christ is *essentially* one, why should she not be *visibly* one ? Inseparable from Christ, why should we be separated from each other ? With an essential unity of faith, why should we not all unite in ex-

cluding uncharitableness? Oh, if the Lord's people—losing sight of every badge but Christian, and of every name but Christ—were to mingle more frequently, confidingly, and prayerfully together, how much more would they find of assimilation, of sympathy, and affection—how much less to sunder, separate, and censure, and how much more to admire, love, and imitate in each other than they had conception of. “I believe in the communion of saints”—would then be, not a cold, heartless, unbelieving acknowledgment of a creed, but the sincere, glowing avowal of a fact! Apply this to our intercourse with Jesus. It would be impossible for us to cultivate the habit of telling Him every sin, every sorrow, every temptation, every trial, in a word, every incident of every hour of our daily history, and not increase in a knowledge of Christ. We should then “grow up *into Christ* in all things.” The flower absorbs the light, the heat, the air, the dew, and so maintains its vitality, unfolds its beauty, and breathes

its fragrance. It is by a similar absorption of Christ into our souls that we grow, becoming vigorous, holy, and fruitful. "He that dwelleth in Me and I in him the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without Me ye can do nothing." Oh, how endeared will Christ become, and God our Father in Him, by this habit of going and telling Jesus everything. The more frequently we go to Jesus the more intimately we shall know Him; and the more intimately we know Him, the more ardently shall we love, self-denyingly serve, and closely resemble Him. Oh how close, confiding, and endearing will your intimacy become by this habit of going and telling Him everything. How will His glory, loveliness, and excellence unfold to your admiring eye. Day by day, and hour by hour, each exigence of its history will reveal stronger reason wherefore you should admire, love, trust, and glorify Christ. Language cannot describe how growingly precious He will become to your soul; how more intensely your heart's af-

fections will clasp and firmly entwine around Him, your whole soul striving day by day to please and glorify Him here, longing to be with Him that you might see and enjoy Him hereafter for ever.

This habit, too, will greatly tend to *the nourishing and strengthening of faith*. It is faith that takes us to Jesus, and each fresh act of faith invigorates the divine principle. Faith, taking everything to Christ, and bringing back everything from Christ, by this process "groweth exceedingly." Would you, my reader, have a faith powerful and stalwart, a faith that can slay the vaunting foe with a pebble and a sling, that demurs not at probabilities or impossibilities, because it leans upon Him with whom all things are possible, then you must have close transactions with Jesus, the "Author and Finisher of your faith." The eaglet's eye acquires strength of vision by gazing upon the sun—thus will your eye of faith be strengthened by "looking unto Jesus," the "Sun of Righteousness," *in everything, and for everything*.

This habit of continuous application to the Lord Jesus *will keep your heart as an evergreen planted by the water-courses.* The springs of its devotion will be kept pure and flowing; its affections fresh and ascending. My reader, true godliness has its empire *in the heart.* As a man's heart, so is he. It is the moral mainspring of the soul—it regulates and governs the whole man. Oh, watch with sleepless vigilance, with the most prayerful interest, the power of godliness in your heart. Let other religious professors, if they will, split hairs and solve abstract problems in theology. Let them speculate and refine, spending their energies and their time in upraising but the scaffolding of the building—let the religion of others more consist in frivolous conversation, heartless levity, and unholy gossip about preachers and preaching, churches and societies—criticising, fault-finding, condemning—with you, my Christian reader, let the one grand, momentous, absorbing matter be, the religion of God in

your soul—the making sure work for eternity. A religious professor may talk about ministers, and churches, and parishes, and societies, all his life, and be lost for ever ! Alas ! alas ! it is with a mournful and solemn conviction of its truth we pen it, the religion of thousands, and of tens of thousands, has no more spiritual vitality than this ! Why is it that in the professing Church of God there is so much vain conversation, idle, worldly gossip—so much evil speaking and backbiting—so much censoriousness, suspicion and condemning ? Alas ! it is because there exists so little real, Christ-like godliness in those who profess it. Why is it that there is so little of the meekness and gentleness of Christ, of the spirit of charity, kindness, and forbearance—the taking the low place—the refusal to join others in hurling the missile, in uncovering the infirmity, and in inflaming the wound of a Christian brother or sister ? Alas ! it is because multitudes who, though professing His name, have no close, heart

transactions with Jesus. The more closely you deal with Christ, the more faithfully you will deal with *yourself*, and the less inclination and time you will have to deal with others. You will feel that to "save *yourself*" were a matter sufficiently momentous to absorb every feeling, and thought, and moment; and that, having made sure of this, all the time and energy and sympathy you have to spare would find its appropriate work in endeavouring to "save others." How is it, then, with you, my reader? Is that kingdom of Jesus, which "cometh not with observation," which "consisteth not in meats and in drinks, but in righteousness, joy, and peace in the Holy Ghost," dwelling, advancing, ascending in you? Are you a *living* soul—enshrining a *living* Christ—yielding in your life the fruit of a *living* faith, and cherishing a *living* hope of *life eternal*? What present transactions have you with Jesus—in your closet, by the wayside, in your families, and amid the din and conflict

of your worldly calling? *This* will be the test and guage of the reality and depth of your Christianity—*your personal dealings with Christ.*

The crowning blessing accruing from this sacred privilege is—*the praise, honour, and glory it will bring to Jesus.* To secure this as its end were worth embarking in any labour, with any self-denial, and at any cost. To plant one gem in His crown—to blend one note in the anthem of His praise—to add one beam to the sun of His glory—Oh, ten thousand lives spent, ten thousand deaths endured, were as nothing! Conceive, if it be possible, what a continuous revenue of glory is accruing to Jesus from your constant habit of conferring with Him—communing with Him—drawing from Him in all the minute concerns of daily life. Each occasion that you repair to confess at His cross—to draw from His fulness—to lay your grief upon His sympathy—to confide in His counsel—to repose in His love, and to

spread around you the adamant shield of His power, you place a fresh diadem upon His head—that head that will ere long appear in the clouds of heaven, wearing and radiant with His “many crowns.”

Live in the constant expectation of soon seeing Him face to face—conversing with whom here below, cheered, beguiled, and sweetened many a weary step of your Christian pilgrimage. That moment is speeding on. In a little while and all that now wounds and ruffles, tempts and pollutes, will have disappeared like the foam upon the billow, and you shall eternally repose your weary soul in the bosom of Jesus.

“A little while to wear the robe of sadness,
To walk with weary feet through thorny ways,
Then to pour forth the fragrant oil of gladness,
And clasp the girdle round the robe of praise.”

Are you, reader, entering upon the New Year still *unconverted*? Oh, we beseech you, begin it with contrition, confession, and prayer at the cross. Dare not to add another year of impenitence, unbelief, and

sin to the many which have gone before to judgment. Seek the "washing of regeneration," which is, "renewing of the Holy Ghost" without which you cannot enter into the kingdom of glory. Seek it with all your heart, and seek it now.

Forward, believer in Christ, to the toils, duties, and trials of another stage of life's journey! Christ is enough for them all, and Christ will be with you in them all, and Christ will triumphantly conduct you through them all. Begin your year—telling Jesus; continue it—telling Jesus; close it—telling Jesus. Imitate the early Christians, who, at the termination of their day of labour, "gathered themselves unto Jesus, and told Him all things both what they had done, and what they had taught." Tell Jesus you have no grace but what He communicates—no strength but what He gives—no love but what He inspires—no sympathy but what He vouchsafes. Then will come His sweet and instant response—"Dost thou hang upon me, my loved disci-

ple, for all? Then all benediction shall be thine, and thine for ever!"

One word ere we close. Do not dis-honour the Lord by repairing to human counsel and sympathy first, and failing, then betake yourself to Him. Many Christians are ruled by this principle of making Christ secondary and subordinate to the creature, greatly to their own loss and His discredit. But in all things, in all teaching, in all service, in all obedience, yea, in all your ways, give Jesus the *pre-eminence*. He asks, it—expects it—and is most worthy of it. Go and tell Jesus *first*. Make Him your confidant before the creature. The bereaved disciples betook them to no mere human sympathy. They went sad and lonely from the grave of their master to the bosom of their Lord, and buried their sorrow in His loving, sympathizing heart. Imitate their Christ-honouring example. Ere you take counsel of man, or ask sympathy of friend-ship—ere you confer and communicate with the dearest and nearest earthly friend—go

and tell Jesus. Thus confiding in Him, He will return your confidence a thousandfold. Pleased with your dependence, honoured by your trust, and moved by your appeal, He will graciously respond, "Thou art my servant, I have chosen thee and not cast thee away. Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness." Enough, my gracious Lord! Enough! Arise, my soul!—
Go AND TELL JESUS.

" O Lord ! how happy is the time,
When in Thy love I rest,
When from my weariness I climb,
E'en to Thy tender breast.
The night of sorrow endeth there,
Thy rays outshine the sun.
And in Thy pardon, and Thy care,
The heaven of heavens is won.

" Let the world call itself my foe,
Or let the world allure,
I care not for the world—I go
To this tried Friend and sure.
And when life's fiercest storms are sent
Upon life's wildest sea,
My little bark is confident,
Because it holds by Thee.

“ When the law threatens endless death,
 Upon the dreadful hill,
 Straightway from its consuming breath
 My soul mounts higher still;
 She hastes to Jesus, wounded, slain,
 And finds in Him her home,
 Whence she shall not go forth again,
 And where no death can come. ”

“ I do not fear the wilderness,
 Where Thou hast been before;
 Nay! rather would I daily press
 After Thee! near Thee, more!
 Thou art my strength, on Thee I lean,
 My heart Thou makest sing,
 And to Thy pastures green at length
 Thy chosen flock wilt bring.

“ And if the gate that opens there
 Be closed to other men,
 It is not closed to those who share
 The heart of Jesus then.
 That is not losing much of life,
 Which is not losing Thee,
 Who art as present in the strife,
 As in the victory!

“ Therefore, how happy is the time,
 When in Thy love I rest,
 When from my weariness I climb,
 E'en to Thy tender breast.
 The night of sorrow endeth there,
 Thy rays outshine the sun,
 And in Thy pardon and Thy care,
 The heaven of heavens is won! ”

From the German of Dresler.

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