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OR,

ENCOURAGEMENTS TO PATIENT WAITING.

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OR WORDS OF

COMFORT TO THE CHRISTIAN PILGRIM.

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ABLE TO SAVE;

OR,

Encouragements to Patient Waiting.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"THE PATHWAY OF PROMISE."

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**"It is not in the summer-tide of life
That the heart hoards its treasures; it is when
The storm is loud, and the rude hurricane
Of sorrow is abroad; when solemn strife,
Such as may move the souls of constant men,
Is struggling in our bosoms, it is then
The heart collects her store with wisdom rife.**

**"For sadness teaches us the truth of things
Which had been hid beneath the crown of flowers
Which gladness wears; and the few silent hours
Of quiet heavenward thought which sorrow brings,
Are better than a life in pleasure's bowers,
Drinking the poisonous chalice which she pours
To quench our heavenlier spirit's murmurings."**

THE Author begs to return his grateful thanks to the Rev. Dr. J. S. B. MONSELL, who has so kindly allowed his Poems in "Parish Musings" to be made use of in this volume: as also to those other Christian friends whose names are not here mentioned, but whose writings have contributed to enrich the pages which follow.

May the effort "to speak a word to him that is weary" be attended with the Divine blessing, and may many of God's tried and suffering ones realize in their hours of weakness, pain, and distress, the soothing, elevating, and strengthening power which lies in Christian poetry.

TO

JAMES TETLEY, Esq., M. D., &c., &c.,

TORQUAY.

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,

To you, with a grateful heart, I dedicate this volume. It was composed at intervals, during a period of much suffering, and while I was under your kind and watchful care as a physician. My desire has therefore been, that it should remain associated with your name.

It will serve, in some degree, to express my deep sense of obligation for the unceasing kindness I experienced from you during my residence at Torquay; and it may at times help to remind us both of many pleasant hours, which, as they passed by strengthened more and more firmly the bonds of affection and of Christian fellowship between us.

I know how earnest is your desire, and how unremitting are your endeavors, to become the instrument of healing to the body, and of imparting comfort to the soul,—of leading the tried and suffering one to the only Healer of humanity—the great Physician; and, withdrawn as I have been, in the providence of God, from my accustomed sphere of duty, I long to be a “fellow-laborer” with you in the latter part of your Christian work.

If, through the blessing of the Eternal Spirit, this volume

shall convey to any child of affliction one gleam of soothing and hope, it will impart additional sweetness to the dealings of our Heavenly Father, to whom all glory shall be ascribed, even to Him "who comforteth us in all our tribulations, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

So may grace be imparted to us to improve the various dealings of our Heavenly Father—that our hearts may be purified—our affections raised to the things which are above, and our earthly will brought into conformity with the will of God. May we be kept by faith ever looking up to Christ—dwelling in Him and He in us, so that "beholding, with open face, as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we all may be changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Yours, in Christian love,

J. A. M.

TORQUAY, *March, 1868.*

I

The Chastening Rod.

JOB v. 17.

"Behold, *happy* is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty."

HAPPINESS! How little does the word *mean* when used in its ordinary sense! We generally esteem those happy who enjoy uninterrupted health, and are apt to imagine that all happiness is gone when they are laid on a bed of sickness. But it is not so. To many of God's children the time of sore trial has been a time of peace and joy,—a time to which they have looked back with the deepest gratitude. Not that sickness is in itself desirable, but it is *precious*. In the buoyancy of health, when our sky is clear—our sun shining brilliantly—and our hearts are full of hope—oh, how prone are we to forget our true character of "strangers and pilgrims" here! how insidiously does the world entwine itself around our heart-strings! and how slowly do we advance in our heavenward journey. But when the sky is darkened, and the heavy clouds are rolling overhead,—

4 THE CHASTENING ROD.

when we are laid prostrate,—weak and helpless,—then is it that we are brought to realise the frailty of our nature, and to become conscious of the truth that “*this* is not our rest.”

In the midst of our heedlessness, God summons us to an *audience*. He who knows the secrets of all hearts has seen that within us which must be corrected. He has discovered us wandering, and He would bring us back. He has watched us paying our homage to the creature, and He would remind us of our duty to Him,—the Creator. He has noticed the gradual yielding of the heart’s affections to things “seen and temporal,” and He would have us give more earnest heed to the things “unseen and eternal.”

“Happy is the man whom God correcteth.” Yes, assuredly, because it is a proof that He *careth* for us. We are not left to wander on without a father’s care, but when our steps are fast nearing dangerous ground, His hand of love is outstretched;—when we are like to stumble on the dark mountains, He points to the path of safety;—when the siren voice is alluring us further and further away, He summons us back, and Himself condescends to

become our Guide. But He will not commune with us in the midst of our heedlessness and folly. He must first draw us aside,—away from the scenes in which we foolishly delighted, away from the companions who were making us as worldly as themselves,—away even from our daily occupation;—He would have us be *alone* with Him.

We are laid on a sick-bed,—health vanishes like a dream,—friends begin to look anxious,—and we are made to pass through days and nights of weariness and pain. All nature wears a gloom around us. The sun still shines, but, for us, he is draped in sadness,—the flowers still bloom, but we cannot enjoy their fragrance,—the seasons change, but they seem ever tending towards dreary winter.

This is the *trial-time* of sickness. There is much to be endured,—much to be struggled against. Hard thoughts enter into the soul,—tempting, sinful, unholy thoughts,—which would lead us to question God's goodness and mercy;—as if He took delight in the sufferings and sorrows of men.

At such a time there is little peace or comfort—and often those who wish to advise and

6 THE CHASTENING ROD.

comfort come too soon. We cannot, as yet, feel that "all is well;"—we are not, as yet, *happy* in being corrected. They would have us at once "be of good cheer," but it may not be.

And, methinks, God does not '*intend* we *should*. We must be brought to solemn thought,—to heart-searching,—to earnest, importunate prayer. The love of the world must be weakened, the cords which knit our heart-strings must be snapt asunder, the longings for earth's giddy joys must be driven from the soul, *ere* we can have the "*happiness*" of a corrected child. But when again we turn "with our whole heart to the Lord," feeling not only that it is a "*Father's hand*" which has been laid on us, but that that "*Father*" desires by this correction to draw us more closely to Himself, *then* does He impart His promised peace; *then* does He give strength to bear meekly the burden laid upon us; and *then*, above all, is the blessed assurance realised, "*Fear not, I am still with thee; I will not leave thee nor forsake thee.*"

Oh! who shall say that the "chastening time" is not a *precious* one when such is the

blessed result? who will for a moment doubt the happiness of the tried one when thus "the light of his Father's countenance has been lifted up," and the Lord has "strengthened him upon the bed of languishing?"

Fellow-sufferers! we may not all of us have realised this blessed condition as ours;—we may be *still* under the cloud;—as yet the struggle may be only *going on*. Let us not give way to despair. Let us *hope on*, let us pray for grace to see God's hand in our sickness, to acknowledge that "of very faithfulness He has afflicted us," and to learn those lessons He designs to teach us. Let us *wait* on the Lord. He will not long delay His coming. In some blessed way He *will* answer us. If He withhold the blessing of health, He will give the more precious one of His own presence. If He see meet to continue our pain and suffering, He will impart strength equal to bear them. If He prolong the time of bodily weakness, He will convey to the soul spiritual nourishment, and "strengthen us with all might in the inner man."

Father of mercies, and God of all comfort

to whom belong the issues of life and death, look down with compassion upon Thy frail and afflicted servant. Oh, enable me to acknowledge the mercy of Thy dispensations, and, without murmuring or doubting, to accept all things as coming from Thee. Give me strength against all my temptations, and patience under all my sufferings. In the midst of all my fears and anxieties, I would give Thee thanks for Thy sparing mercy. I have grievously sinned, O Lord, and merit Thy hot displeasure. But I would cast myself wholly upon Thy mercy in Christ Jesus. Oh, hear me in the day of trouble. Send help from Thy sanctuary, and strengthen me out of Zion. Give me grace, O Lord, in remembrance of Thy past loving-kindness, so to trust in Thy goodness, to submit to Thy wisdom, and meekly to bear what Thou thinkest fit to lay upon me, that I may be brought to say at the last, "It was good for me that I was afflicted."

Grant this measure of grace unto Thy servant for Thy Son Jesus Christ, His sake.—AMEN.

*"Thy way is in the sea, and Thy path in the great waters,
and Thy footsteps are not known."—Ps. lxxvii. 19.*

I ask'd for grace to lift me high
Above the world's depressing cares;
God sent me sorrows;—with a sigh
I said, He has not heard my prayers.

I ask'd for light, that I might see
My path along life's thorny road;
But clouds and darkness shadow'd me,
When I expected light from God.

I ask'd for peace, that I might rest,
To think my sacred duties o'er;
When lo! such horrors fill'd my breast
As I had never felt before.

And oh, I cried, can this be prayer,
Whose plaints the steadfast mountains move;
Can this be heaven's prevailing care,—
And, O my God, is this Thy love?

But soon I found that sorrow, worn
As Duty's garment, strength supplies;
And out of darkness, meekly borne,
Unto the righteous light doth rise.

10 *THE CHASTENING ROD.*

And soon I found that fears, which stirr'd
 My startled soul God's will to do,
On me more real peace conferr'd
 Than in life's calm I ever knew.

Then, Lord, in Thy mysterious ways,
 Lead my dependent spirit on;
And whensoe'er it kneels and prays,
 Let it but say,—“Thy will be done.”

Let its one thought, one hope, one prayer,
 Thine image seek—Thy glory see;
Let every other grief and care,
 Be left confidingly to Thee!

J. S. B. MONSELL.

NEARER TO THEE.

Nearer, my God, to Thee,
 Nearer to Thee!
E'en though it be a cross
 That raiseth me,
Still all my song shall be—
“ Nearer, my God, to Thee,
 Nearer to Thee.”

Though like a wanderer,
The sun gone down,
Darkness comes over me—
My rest a stone;
Yet in my dreams I 'll be
Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee.

Then let the way appear
Steps unto heaven,
All that Thou sendest me,
In mercy given,
Angels to beckon me,
Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee.

Or if on joyful wing
Cleaving the sky,
Sun, moon, and stars forgot,
Upwards I fly,
Still all my song shall be—
“Nearer, my God, to Thee
Nearer to Thee.”

CAREY.

PAINFUL DISCIPLINE.

Sustain me, Lord, and let me neither shrink
Nor scorn the rod of painful discipline,
The cup my Father gives me I would drink,
And bend my will submissively to Thine.

I know the cross is needful, and I know
In love, and not in wrath, Thou chastenest ;
The sufferings Thy children undergo
But fit them sooner for eternal rest.

Our days are number'd ; God alone can see
The end from the beginning. He alone
Sees on the wide plains of futurity
The fruitage of the seeds our hands have sown.

Let us walk softly, for our God we bear
Much precious seed committed to our trust ;
Water'd with tears, and cherish'd with due care,
It will spring forth in beauty from the dust.

Deep are the chastenings that our spirits need,
To wean them from the idolatry of earth ;
Our flesh must tremble, and our hearts must bleed,
Ere life can yield us fruits of any worth.

Are there not idols which usurp the throne
Where God alone should sit? How many a
heart
Bows down, if not before a god of stone,
Before a living, breathing counterpart!

Some cherish'd hope, or some perplexing care,
Follows our worldly hearts where'er we go,
And ghost-like haunts the holy house of prayer,
When we would gladly turn from all below!

Oh, pity us, kind Father, and forgive
The weakness of our flesh, which overpowers
Our best intentions, and do Thou receive,
For Jesu's sake, these sinful hearts of ours.

Raise our affections higher, let us find
Enough to satisfy our souls in Thee,
And help us to resign with willing mind
Whatever tempts us to idolatry.

THE DOVE ON THE CROSS.

II.

Vain is the Help of Man.

PSALM cxlii. 8.

“Put not your *trust* in the son of man, in whom there
is no help.”

IN *one* sense we are *very* dependent on each other. How does the infant cling to the arm of its mother! and how do we in sickness trust to the care and kindness of a faithful attendant! In every relation of life we are comforted, upheld, sustained by those around us—and especially is this the case in the family of Christ. Every member feels it is his solemn duty to support the weak,—to gladden the sorrowful,—to console the mourner. If he does *not*, he has not the mind of Christ,—he has not been drinking in the spirit of Him who came “to bind up the broken-hearted, and to pour the balm of consolation into the wounded spirit.”

The help we are sometimes privileged to give one another is very precious. The kindly look;—how often has it chased sadness from the brow, even as the bright ray of sunshine chases the dark cloud from the heavens! The

18 VAIN IS THE HELP OF MAN.

word of sympathy ;—how often has it sounded in the secret chambers of the soul,—awakening gladness, where all was silence and gloom ! And who shall tell how often God's sweet promises, whispered gently by the sick-bed, have calmed and tranquillised the troubled soul, even as of old the words of Jesus, “ Peace, be still,” soothed the tempestuous billows, so that “ immediately there was a great calm ? ”

But in *another* and higher sense, it is true that “ vain is the help of man.” We can only *effectually* help each other when we are “ instruments in God's hand.” He makes use of us as His servants, and when we feel and realise our responsibility as such, then our feeble efforts are blessed, and we become “ sons of consolation.” Apart from this, of what avail is it that the physician prescribes, or that the minister visits the chamber of sickness ? Health will not return at the bidding of the one, nor comfort flow from the exhortations of the other. It matters not that there is the exercise of the highest skill, and the utterance of the most thrilling eloquence. Still the burden of disease will bear down the body, and the load of anxiety oppress the spirit. But when the Divine bless-

ing is vouchsafed, and the Spirit pours forth His promised influence, all is changed. The pulse beats again with health,—the soul is freed from its agitations and alarms.

Shall I, then, “*trust* in the son of man?” Nay, rather, shall I not trust in Him who alone “hath the issues of life and death?” My heart may be filled with gratitude and love to those who have been the “instruments in God’s hand,” and they may become dear to me even as my own flesh; but I will not “put my *trust*” in them: I will look higher far—to *Him* who has promised to watch over me with a Father’s care, and whose power nothing can withstand. I will look to Him who is seated as my Advocate and Elder Brother at the Father’s right hand, and who has promised to ‘undertake for me,’ and to plead, in my behalf, the merits of His own most precious blood. I will look to Him who alone can carry home the truth to my heart, even the Comforting Spirit,—at whose bidding doubt and fear must vanish, and hope and joy take possession of my soul.

Yes, suffering child! it is ever well to look beyond the creature; to realise the fact that *only* one Arm is all-powerful,—one Heart all-

loving,—one Ear ever open,—one Eye never closed ;—and that to Him, and Him alone, “the secrets and sorrows, the wants and desires of the heart,” are known. Just as far as we trace God’s hand in what our fellow-creatures do in our behalf, earthly love and sympathy and kindness will be helpful and comforting to us. When we forget or overlook this, we will fail to derive any benefit,—any lasting comfort from their efforts.

Besides, there are wants of the spirit and extremities of suffering and trial when human help is utterly unavailing. It cannot come close enough to us. It cannot reach the seat of anguish. There are inner depths in our souls of which we are at times painfully conscious, where *only one Voice* can be heard. God sometimes permits anxiety, fear, anguish, to take possession of these, that we may be driven to Him by finding, short of Him, “no help in man.” He would have us make *Him* our confidence, our refuge, our strength. He would have us *know Him* as our Father and friend,—not *know about Him*, but *know Him*. It is this for which we are training. It is this which God is teaching us during our earthly sojourn,—by

disappointments and sorrows,—by sickness and trial and bodily infirmities,—by dangers without and fears within,—by sore and agonising extremities where human help cannot reach us;—by one and all is He drawing us to Himself and bidding us put *all* our *trust* in Him, “to acquaint ourselves with Him and be at peace.”

And, surely, it is a comforting and blessed thought, that “*He careth* for us,”—that all our concerns are full of interest in His sight. Our fellow-men may refuse *their* sympathy. *He* never will. *They* may be distant from us in the hour of need. *He* is “*a present* help in the time of trouble.” *They* may be occupied and engrossed with self. *His* ear “is ever open to *our* cry.” *They* may become wearied of helping us. *He* is ever “touched by our infirmities,” and ever ready to heal our woes. Let us, then, with feelings of increasing love and gratitude, as we meditate on the care of our heavenly Father, reveal to Him all our wants and weaknesses, all our sorrows and anxieties, all our sins and shortcomings; assured that, of His infinite mercy, He will bestow upon us pardon, peace, help, hope, and joy.

22 VAIN IS THE HELP OF MAN.

Heavenly Father, I would draw near unto Thee with humble confidence, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. I thank Thee for all Thy past goodness, for Thy watchful providence, Thine unceasing care. I bless Thee for the gracious offers of mercy which Thou hast given me, and I pray that Thou wouldest enable me to place all my confidence in Him whom Thou hast sent to seek and save the lost. Oh, may His precious blood wash out the dark stain of sin from my soul. Blessed Saviour, make me Thine in heart and soul. Oh, give me Thy Spirit. May He purify my nature and impress Thine image on my heart.

Help me, O Lord, in this time of sickness, to look up to Thee as my only help. Keep me from all repining thoughts, and in remembrance of Thy past loving-kindness, help me now to trust in Thy goodness and to submit to Thy will. Make me patient, humble, and resigned, and enable me to bring forth more fruit to Thy glory. Strengthen me ever, to shew the power of Thy grace, in my humility, gentleness, love, and gratitude, to all who help my infirmities and shew kindness to me. May I ever regard them as instruments in Thy hands,

and able to bring me comfort according to Thy pleasure. Give me, O God, a simple, entire dependence upon Thee, and enable me in all things to commit my way unto Thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.—AMEN.

*"I will mention the loving-kindnesses of the Lord."—
Isa. lxiii. 7.*

My God, my Saviour, sweet to be
Dependent every hour on Thee!
Amid life's bitterness, how sweet
Thy loving-kindnesses to meet!

Sweet to hold converse with Thee, Lord!
And hear Thee answer by Thy Word;
Thy love in all my life to trace,
And live that life—the child of grace.

To feel the very light and glow
Of heaven's own gladness here below;
And drink those sparkling streams, whose rills
Rise 'mid the everlasting hills!

None, walking as Thy Word hath taught,
Have ever sought, and found Thee not;
Or brought to Thee a single care,
Thou didst not either take or share.

24 VAIN IS THE HELP OF MAN.

My God, my Saviour, grant that I
May with Thee live, and in Thee die!
'Tis all my spirit asks, but less
Thou know'st would not be happiness.

PARISH MUSINGS

GOD OUR STRENGTH.

Man, in his weakness, needs a stronger stay
Than fellow-men, the holiest and the best;
And yet we turn to them from day to day,
As if in them our spirits could find rest.

Gently untwine our childish hands, that cling
To such inadequate supports as these,
And shelter us beneath Thy heavenly wing,
Till we have learn'd to walk alone with ease.

Help us, O Lord, with patient love to bear
Each other's faults, to suffer with true meek-
ness;

Help us each other's joys and griefs to share,
But let us turn to Thee alone in weakness.

THE DOVE ON THE CROSS.

THE ELDER BROTHER.

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

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

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

Yes, in me abroad He sheddeth
Joys unearthly, love and light;
And to cover me He spreadeth
His paternal wing of might!

III.

The Cry of Distress.

2 SAM. xxii. 7.

"In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried to my God: and he did hear my voice out of his temple, and my cry did enter into his ears."

IT is related of King Asa, that an alarming and painful disease came upon him—he was afflicted with a grievous bodily calamity; and his illness continued to increase, “until his disease was exceeding great.” Yet, although on a former occasion he had gathered “all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them, out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon,” and had “entered into a solemn covenant with them to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart, and with all their soul,” we are told that, when sickness came upon him, he forgot his promise; and this is the melancholy declaration of Scripture, “In his disease he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians.”

What a sad contrast between this sinful forgetfulness, and the heartfelt urgency of the royal psalmist! What wonder that the next thing

recorded of the one is his death, and by the other, that the “Lord heard his voice, and his cry did enter into His ears.” Asa’s cry of distress, being made only to man, brought no relief: the psalmist’s prayer to the Most High was heard and answered.

Which of these examples have *we* followed? When pain and suffering have laid hold upon us, to whom, in *our* extremity, have we made our appeal? Has it been to feeble, impotent man, whose every effort is powerless without God’s blessing? or has it been to Him who, in His holy temple, hearkens to the cry of the humblest, the weakest, of His children?

Alas! have we not to acknowledge that many a time in our distress we have looked for help *only* to man? We have made our appeal to them, believing that they could deliver us, and we have wondered that the sickness was not removed—the disease not cured.

Asa’s sin was, not his having applied to the physicians, but his having neglected, first of all, “to seek the Lord.” We have been guilty, not in having had recourse to means, but in trusting solely to their efficacy.

Whatever be our danger or disease, we can

only hope for deliverance by immediately “calling upon the Lord, and crying to our God.” For is not this the end He has in view? He does not visit us with sore calamity only to scare and frighten us away from Him, but that our danger may drive us to Him. He permits terror to lay hold upon us that we may take refuge in His arms. He suffers our faith to fail that we may cling more confidingly to His almighty arm. He delays the removal of disease that we may become more importunate in prayer,—that we may become more patient, resigned, and submissive to His will. When these ends are accomplished, He speaks the word, He dispels our fears, He grants our desires, He answers our prayers.

“A little while, through grief and care,
Thy servants, Lord, their cross must bear:
Still let this thought our hearts beguile—
It is but for a little while.”

“The cry of distress.” Oh! who but a doubting, faithless one would ever imagine that the God of love would be indifferent when it came “into His ears?” He, our Father, our covenant-God,—He “who has not spared His own Son,

but delivered Him up to the death for us," shall He refuse to hear our cry when danger or calamity threatens to overwhelm us? Away with such doubts! "The Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me," was the assurance of the Saviour to His disciples; and still the same words are true regarding all who love the Lord Jesus Christ. It is in love that He lays His hand upon us, in love that He seems to deny our prayers, in love that He delays to send "help out of Zion." The Father of mercies is evermore compassionately intent upon the sufferings of His dear children, according to the depth and poignancy of their afflictions. Our "cry of distress" He has indeed heard, but He delays to answer it that we may learn to persevere in asking,—that the passionate fervency of unchastened prayer may be deepened into the strong breath of humble supplication,—that patience may have her perfect work,—that we may still "wait upon the Lord, who hideth His face,"—that we may grow to trust His love, to know what He is to us, yea, what He is to all who wait upon Him. Oh! it is not that His ear is heavy, it is not that the tenderness of His sympathy is blunted, it is a part of His plan of

faithfulness and wisdom. He is training His children,—training them for the greatest dignity and the highest happiness. And He best knows *how* to do it. We might rather choose comfort, health, an immediate answer to all our prayers; but we must be taught that *holiness* is of more importance than comfort, fellowship with God more precious than health, and that “through *much* tribulation we must enter the kingdom.” We must be brought to an entire and willing surrender of the soul to Him, that, in His own way, and by His own methods, He may cleanse it, may strengthen it, may renew it, may dwell in it, make it His eternally.

Suffering child of God! does thy heart fail thee? hast *thou* raised “the cry of distress,” and received no answer, and art thou beginning to doubt the love, the faithfulness of God? Oh, trust in Him still! He *has* heard thee,—thy cry *did* enter into His ears. Cast yourself in the full assurance of faith upon Him, and all shall be well. It is He himself who has stirred up your soul in the hour of extremity to call upon Him; and He has stirred you up to call because He means to grant your desire, and this is His way of granting it. He has let this danger

threaten you that you may draw nearer to Him,—that you may open to Him your grief, your anxiety, your difficulties,—that you may shew Him your need,—that you may plead with Him by His covenant of tears,—and, flying from all others, and even from yourself, hide in His bosom. Oh! thou dost not love thyself better than He loves thee! thou canst not shrink from pain more than He dislikes thy bearing it; and if He permits it still to continue, it is that a greater good may result to you in bearing it,—that your heart may receive and retain deeper and sharper impressions of the likeness of your Lord. Oh, then, count the season of suffering a precious, blessed season, though it be dim and overcast,—a season of promise and springing freshness,—a token of His nearness, and of His purpose to cleanse you for His own: “Blessed are ye that weep now.” He that is greatly tried, if he be learning obedience after the example of his Lord, is not far from the kingdom of God. Our heavenly Father is perfecting His own work, tracing the divine lineaments with His wise and gentle hand. He that perfected His own Son through sufferings, has brought many sons to glory by the same rough road, even by

“the way of the wilderness and of the flood.” He is bringing you home to Himself. Do not, then, shrink because the path is broken and solitary,—because at times the cry of distress, “Lord, help me,” is not answered by a word; for the way is short, and the end blessed, and your every footstep is marked by an eye of love,—your every supplication “enters into the ears” of the Lord God of Sabaoth. He knows your every prayer for guidance, deliverance, and help,—your every effort to bear patiently and contentedly what He has laid upon you, and to profit by the visitation,—to hear the rod, and Him who appointed it,—to yield yourself always meekly, as the redeemed of Christ, to the hand of God, as of a loving Father. All these things, which man can never know, are known and valued by Him.

Still hope, still struggle on, still feel assured that you are not under a harsh rod of vindictive infliction, but under the watchful care of a “Father in heaven,” whomingles for you joy and sorrow, as He sees best for you, and who will “neither fail you nor forsake you.”

O merciful God, who seest all our weakness,

and the troubles we labour under, have regard unto the prayer of Thy servant, who now implores Thy comfort, Thy direction, and Thy help. Grant me grace neither to grieve nor repine under this Thy chastisement. May I be enabled to regard my troubles as an exercise of my faith, and patience, and humility; and may I improve all my afflictions to the good of my soul and to Thy glory. Thou alone knowest what is best for us. Let me never dispute Thy goodness or wisdom, but ever trust Thee, even when I cannot trace Thee. Oh, help me, good Lord, that I may cheerfully suffer and obediently do Thy will, and choose what Thou choosest, and observe the ways of Thy providence, and revere Thy judgments, and wait for Thy mercy, and delight in Thy dispensations, and expect that all things shall work together for good to them that love Thee.

Grant this, O Father, through Jesus Christ our blessed Saviour.—AMEN.

"O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me."—
ISA. xxxviii. 14.

Lord, I'm oppress'd! oh, undertake
For me, for my Redeemer's sake!
Unclean, unworthy, I confess;
Yet, oh, accept His righteousness!

On Him alone I dare repose;
From Him alone my comfort flows;
And all I am, or hope to be,
I owe, through Him, my God, to Thee!

A wanderer—His mercy sought!
A slave—His blood my freedom bought!
And dead in trespasses and sin—
His voice awoke life's pulse within!

Hear such a monument of grace,
Presuming thus to seek Thy face:
Accept my prayer; and for Thy Son,
Oh, perfect Thou the work begun!

Low at Thy footstool, Lord, I lie;
Smile on me here, or else I die—
Smile on me! nor let sin destroy
The bursting blossoms of my joy,

Since faint and feeble, weak and low,
 I cannot stay, yet dare not go ;
 I have no strength, no hope, no plea,
 Unless Thou undertake for me !

J. B. S. MONSELL.

Why restless, why so weary,
 My soul, why so cast down ?
 Is all around so dreary,
 And hath the cross no crown ?
 Where is the God who found thee,
 Who once could make thee glad ?
 Are not His arms around thee,
 Then wherefore art thou sad ?

Oh, trust the Lord who bought thee !
 Oh, trust the sinner's Friend !
 The wondrous love that sought thee,
 Will keep thee to the end ;
 Will give a glorious morrow
 To this thy night of pain,
 And make thy dews of sorrow
 Like " shining after rain ! "

PARISH MUSINGS.

IV.

Past Toys

LAM. v. 15.

"The joy of our heart is ceased."

THE retrospect of the past, in its power to excite joy or grief, depends very much on our present condition. So long as we are *prosperous*, we can look back with feelings of delight,—so long as we are *healthy*, we can think of the years that have gone by with pleasure,—so long as there are no *broken arcs* in the family circle, we can recall the days of childhood with joyful emotion. And it is the same with our spiritual nature: so long as we have the *inward consciousness* that the light of God's countenance is shining upon us, we are glad and joyous,—so long as we have *peace, calmness, rest* of soul, we can think of other days without a tear. But let *events* change, and how changed are *we!* When prosperity departs, what pain do we often experience in recalling scenes which can no more return! When disease lays us prostrate, how sadly do we think of the time of health! And

when inward soul-trouble comes upon us, when we are sick at heart, how do we cry with the patriarch, "Oh that it were with me as in months past!"

Reader, has not some such feeling been experienced by you in the time of sickness and trial? Perhaps it has been your lot to be summoned to the endurance of trial when your sky seemed brightest, when hope filled your breast, and the pathway of life was fair and pleasant. Suddenly the sky became overcast,—health declined, the rose faded from the cheek, the canker-worm gnawed at the vitals, and weakness and weariness took the place of strength and vigour? No longer able to mingle in the crowd, destitute even of strength to discharge accustomed duty,—oh, have not *past joys*, the recollection of days of health, of innocent enjoyment with friends you dearly loved, of scenes in which without one sigh of weariness you were wont to be an actor, have not these things come upon you with painful intensity during days and nights of languor, suffering, and wakefulness?

We have all felt this—all of us, at least, who know what is meant by failing strength, by increasing debility, by helpless prostration,

by long-continued sickness. At such times we must pray more earnestly for grace: grace to keep us from repining,—grace to enable us to see that God still means kindly,—grace to realise what might have been *lost* to us by unbroken health, but *gained* by us in the time of sickness,—grace to be grateful that we *ever* had *joys* in the past whilst we only merited sorrows,—grace to extract all the *good* which is treasured up for us by our heavenly Father in *that* which to a careless eye seems only *evil*. For let us remember that what *we* count *joy* is not really so; and the blessed lot is not to live on in the world unchastened and unchecked,—undisturbed by sorrow or suffering, having our good things in this life,—left to our own ways;—it is to lie low (well is it for us if it be of our own accord, yet anyhow to lie low!) under the Saviour's cross. Though for a time it lie heavy upon us, it is not so heavy as sin; though it wound us, they are “the wounds of a Friend;” though it open the floodgates of grief, it is that we may be partakers of heavenly joy; though it seem to rob us of some things which we counted precious, it is that we may obtain others infinitely more valuable—enduring as eternity itself. And if

sickness become the means of drawing us more closely to Christ,—if the discipline we are now undergoing (albeit it separate us from what we counted our *joys*) is intended to work for *good*, to clear our hearts from dross, to enable us to see Him as once we saw Him not, amidst the shadows of this busy life of trifles, and to admit us to the high and holy privilege of hearing His voice sounding closer to us than it ever did before,—oh, shall we murmur or complain that these “*past joys*” are no longer ours? Shall we not cease from repining or impatience when we think of His *present* gracious purpose regarding us, and say, “Lord, do with me as Thou pleasest. Carry on Thine own work, and make me submissive to Thy will?”

Be this your prayer, suffering Christian, and sickness will be the means of awakening within your heart songs of “*joy*” which will gladden every remaining step of your pilgrimage here, and sound throughout the ages of a blessed eternity. “*Past joys*” will then seem small in comparison with “*present*.
Gradually you will see the unfolding of the plan of Providence, and be amazed to find that “*all things*,”—joy and sorrow, ease and pain, health and sickness,

were working *together* for your good,—that the great end which your Father had chiefly in view, in all your afflictions, was the glory of His name, in your spiritual health and recovery, in your being brought to the knowledge of Himself, in your being made a chosen vessel full of His power and of the riches of His grace.

Had your day continued *all* sunshine,—your earthly joys ever increasing, and your health, ease, and worldly comfort suffering no break,—you would soon have forgotten God,—soon have wandered far from the Saviour,—soon have become unmindful of your character and destiny.

“ It needs our hearts be wean'd from earth,
 It needs that we be driven
 By loss of every earthly stay
 To seek our joys in heaven.

“ Yes, we must follow in the path
 Our Lord and Saviour run,
 We must not find a resting-place
 Where He we love had none.”

Oh! then, was it not in mercy that the dark shadow crossed your path,—that the visitation came from God,—that the hand of love arrested you,—and that you were called to become the

tenant of the sick-room and the sick-bed, with their weariness and their pain—their days of languor, and their nights of restlessness?

You are brought thither by Him “ who doth not afflict willingly ;” into His own school, there to learn to read His own handwriting,—to learn Heaven’s holy alphabet,—to see that earthly sorrow is the heavenly name for joy, and bodily pain for spiritual improvement, and the present wounding of the heart for its healing and eternal cure. You are brought thither that, by the power of His Holy Spirit, He may mould your heart as He will,—may purify, and enlighten, and soften, and strengthen, and deepen it by His presence in the cloud and mystery of sorrow.

Oh, then, think not so much of “ past joys ” as of securing, in this hour of sickness, the peace, the comfort, the joy of a “ present Saviour.” With Him by your side, you will be able to “ rejoice in *tribulation*;” you will bid it welcome ; you will cherish it as a heavenly visitant —a messenger sent from above with healing to your soul. You will find “ the bow in the cloud,” the Saviour’s light arising out of darkness, His form upon the troubled waters ; and if He hush them not, He will say to your soul, “ Fear not,

for I am with thee." He will make it more joyful for you to lie down in trouble and anguish, while He is with you, than ever any of the joys of this world were while He was less present with you, or wherein you forgot, and turned aside from Him.

Suffering, *in itself*, were a punishment for sin,—oppressive, hopeless,—but through God's mercy in Christ, it is His healing medicine, to burn out our wounds, and purify us for His presence. Every throb of pain, every pang of soul-agony, is a messenger from Him, testifying, if we will regard it, His fatherly care,—tempering our cup with pain and sorrow, as He sees needful for us,—loosening our hold of this life,—leading up thitherward, where there shall be no pain,—humbling us, as being creatures who require it, and deserve far more,—teaching us to look into ourselves, to see for what disease in us this medicine has been sent.

Yes, every sorrow we meet with is a billow on this world's tumultuous sea, which we must cross, to bear us nearer to our home; every robbed earthly enjoyment is a weight removed from off us, which was bearing down our spirits when they should have been soaring upwards—heavenwards—homewards—Godwards.

So walking on earth, you may be in heaven—you may be a partaker of that “joy with which a stranger cannot intermeddle,” of that “peace which passeth all understanding;” you may live beside the throne of grace, drawing closer the ties which no privation, nor suffering, nor vicissitude can dissolve; you may connect “a time of need” with the best and brightest manifestations of mercy and grace to your soul.

“Look not mournfully into the past:
It comes not back again;
Wisely improve the present—it is thine;
Go forth to meet the shadowy future
Without fear, and with a manly heart.”

The remembrance of “past joys” will not then be dangerous or painful to you. Your “present joy” will be better far: the joy of near and sweet communion with your God and Saviour,—the joy of so hearkening to His voice of love, that pain and sorrow are utterly forgotten,—the joy of being so “*alone* with God,” that every murmuring is hushed, every disquietude removed,—the joy of having such a manifestation of the Redeemer’s glory to your soul as will shed a calm and blissful radiance

around every prospect, and proves the earnest of that better heritage where “there is fulness of joy for evermore.”

Oh, then, look earnestly to Him,—try to realise His presence,—hearken for His voice of love; and instead of murmuring because past joys cannot be recalled, pray that “present joy” may be imparted,—that the Saviour may hold communion with you, and pour into your heart that “joy which no man taketh from you”—that the language of your soul may be—

“Lord, as Thou wilt! nor this, nor that I will:

Lord, as Thou wilt, so only let it be!

Lord, I am Thine! Thy pleasure, Lord, fulfil!

I, as a child, will lift mine eyes to Thee.”

Gracious and merciful Father! who dost not willingly afflict the children of men; but dost rebuke and chasten those whom Thou lovest: look down upon me, Thine unworthy servant, and have mercy upon me for Christ’s sake! I acknowledge the justice and the mercy of Thy dealings with me. Oh, keep me from murmuring because past joys are no longer mine. Give me to feel that Thou knowest the discipline I need, and that earthly joy cannot impart heavenly

peace. Although Thou hast visited me with sickness, and laid Thine hand upon me, oh grant that I may still have inward joy and comfort. May I have grace to surrender all things into Thy hands, referring the disposal of them to Thee—and that heartily and fully. Even in the darkest night of sorrow may I cast anchor in Thee, and repose on Thee when I see no light, remembering that this is not my hope, nor the place of my rest, but the place of my trial and conflict; and that my home is above. Good Lord and Father, of Thine infinite mercy Thou hast called me to eternal glory: save me, then, I pray Thee, from ever being so ungrateful as to repine against Thee, and so to drown precious heavenly blessings in any little trouble that befalls me; give me more deep thoughts of the joys of the world to come; lift my eyes to that state where Thy saints now rejoice before Thee; direct my steps to it, and lead me towards it, cheerful and unwearied, by an assured hope that the joyful day will at length come, when, as Christ's disciple, I too shall be admitted into the fullest light. Oh, give me grace to cast myself wholly on Thy mercy, and neither to despise Thy chastenings, nor faint under them; but,

with resignation to Thy blessed will, and acknowledgment of Thy paternal love, to speak good of Thy name, now and ever, through Jesus Christ our Lord.—AMEN.

JEHOVAH-JIREH.

When earthly joys glide fast away,
When hopes and comforts flee;
When foes beset, and friends betray,
I turn, my God, to Thee!

Thy nature, Lord, no change can know;
Thy promise still is sure;
And ills can ne'er so hopeless grow
But Thou canst find a cure.

Deliverance comes most bright and blest
At danger's darkest hour;
And man's extremity is best
To prove Almighty power.

High as Thou art, Thou still art near
When suppliants succour crave;
And as Thine ear is swift to hear,
Thy arm is strong to save.

LYTE'S POEMS.

"Oh that I were as in months past!"—JOB xxix. 2.

Oh for the warmth of other days,
The fervour and the fire,
That breathed through every song of praise,
And kindled each desire!
That gave the depth of holy love
To the still voice of prayer,
When first it wing'd its way above,
To plead a Saviour there!

Oh for that love, so deep, so true,—
That first young love of heaven,
That fill'd this soul, when first it knew
Its sins were all forgiven!
When first it felt the saving power
Of Christ's atoning blood;
And in that hope-reviving hour,
Gave itself up to God!

But colder now,—more careless grown,
This heart seems hard or dead;
The love once felt is now unknown,
The faith once fervent,—fled!
While even He, whose dawning ray
Of love such comfort brought,
'Mid blessings of a perfect day,
Is now almost forgot.

Time was when prayer was a delight,
And precious was the word :
To muse therein both day and night,
And commune with the Lord !
But now, a privilege no more,
'Tis duty only moves ;
Because I fear Him, I adore,—
And not because He loves.

Oh for the warmth of other days !—
And yet, how vain must be
Such wishes, Lord, unless my ways
With Thy commands agree !
For love must die, and joy must cease,
When man forgets his God ;
And paths of pleasantness and peace
The careless never trod.

Lord, make this heart more purely Thine,
And such fond love supply,
'Mid feeling's premature decline,
That faith may never die !
So shall each careless, cold desire
Once more devoutly burn ;
And all the fervour and the fire
Of heaven's first love return.

PARISH MUSINGS.

"I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me."—Ps. cxix. 75.

For what shall I praise Thee, my God and my King,

For what blessings the tribute of gratitude bring?
Shall I praise Thee for pleasure, for health, and
for ease,

For the spring of delight, and the sunshine of
peace?

Shall I praise Thee for flowers that bloom'd on
my breast,

For joys in perspective, and pleasures possess'd?
For the spirits that heighten'd my days of
delight,

And the slumbers that sat on my pillow by
night?

For this should I praise Thee; but if only for
this,

I should leave half untold the donation of bliss.

I thank Thee for sickness, for sorrow, for care,
For the thorns I have gather'd, the anguish I
bear!

For nights of anxiety, watchings, and tears,
A present of pain, a perspective of fears ;
I praise Thee, I bless Thee, my King and my
God,
For the good and the evil Thy hand hath
bestow'd.

The flowers they were sweet, but their fragrance
is flown ;
They yielded no fruit, but are wither'd and gone ;
The thorn it was poignant, but precious to me :
'Twas the message of mercy—it led me to Thee !

FOR A SUFFERING BELIEVER.

And shall a sinful worm complain
Of weary days, and nights of pain ?
Shall I arraign the will of God,
Who bought me with His precious blood ?

Are not my times within His hand ?
Are not my pains at His command ?
Do I not hear Him sweetly say,
“ Strength shall be given as thy day ? ”

Oh, may these light afflictions prove
Means to increase my faith and love!
And may I meekly bear the cross,
In mercy sent to purge my dross!

Am I not His—His ransom'd one—
A burning brand from Satan won?
Have I a grief He does not share,
A pain He helps me not to bear?

Oh no! Emmanuel guards my bed;
His arms of love support my head;
Like John, I lean upon His breast,
And find in Him a perfect rest.

Then, welcome trials, welcome pains,
Since Jesus thus my head sustains;
He will receive my parting breath,
And guide me through the vale of death!

V.

Submission.

LUKE xi. 2
“Thy will be done.”

SUCH is part of the prayer which our Saviour taught His disciples. It is familiar to us all. We have lisped it at a mother's knee, we have given utterance to it in the house of prayer, and in the secrecy of our closets we have offered it up at the throne of the heavenly grace. And yet, how seldom have we fully realised its import, and given our willing, heartfelt response to the petition! The truth is, we can only fathom its deep meaning, and attain the power of saying “Amen” from the heart, *by degrees*. And the place where our heavenly Father oftenest imparts the power is the *chamber of sickness*. There we feel the intense *reality* of the spiritual struggle,—the battlings of the human will against the Divine,—the wrestlings between doubt and trust, between earth and heaven, between things seen and temporal, and things unseen and eternal. It is for the very purpose of teaching us

submission, that trials, and sickness, and sorrows come upon us. In health and prosperity our great desire is *self-pleasure*, or looking for a state of rest and satisfaction here, instead of taking up the cross,—of labour in duty, and submission to the will of God, with a renunciation of all worldly schemes of happiness, and patience for death to put us in possession of it. And God, who seeks our well-being, who desires to bring our will into entire conformity with His own, withdraws us from the world, that by the painful *necessity* of sickness, suffering, crosses, He may break the strong chain which binds us to the world, may crucify our wills, may lead us to look ever to Him, and to trust in His promised faithfulness and unerring wisdom. God knows that without *holiness* we can have no true *happiness*,—that our hearts can find no true rest till they are drawn *upwards*, and centred in Him; and therefore He appoints us a continual process of purification and refining, till the dross of selfishness, impatience, murmuring, and self-pleasing is removed from our hearts, and we are brought to say, as we never could before, “Father, Thy will be done.” For this end are we

summoned to enter the furnace of sharp affliction,—for this end is long-continued suffering permitted,—for this end have we sometimes days, and nights, and months, and years of weariness, and anguish, and bitter disappointment.

Tried one ! do *you* feel it a difficult thing, in the midst of pain, and weakness, and bodily infirmity, to say, "Thy will be done." Oh ! deem it not strange,—saints now in glory have been vexed and troubled by the same thought; often have they grieved and lamented because they were conscious of fretfulness and impatience under the hand of God. Whilst it is the very secret, the mystery of solid peace within, still it is the hardest and most difficult of all lessons, to resign everything to God's will, to be disposed of at His pleasure, without one resisting, one opposing thought. But if you are *learning*, if you are *striving* to endure with patience, if you are making *constant efforts*, be they ever so feeble, to cherish a meek and submissive spirit, fear not. All shall yet be well ; more grace will be given you. The heavier the trial, the larger will be the measure of strength.

Remember the example of your blessed

Lord. He went through far more than you can be called to suffer. His sorrows were not merited, as yours have been. He was all pure; *suffering* could find in Him no more to cleanse than *sin* could find to fasten upon. Yet *whose* sorrow was like unto His? who ever passed through such a fiery ordeal? And why was it? That He "might learn *obedience* by the things that He suffered." He was made "perfect" by sufferings; and of this perfection, after the measure of a creature and the proportions of our mere manhood, are the saints made to partake; they are purified, that they may be perfect. And therefore the sorrows of the holiest minds are the highest approaches to the mind of Christ, and are full of a meaning which few can comprehend. Oh, then, strive to follow the Saviour's steps! Be not dispirited, be not afraid. Keep a good heart, and you will be carried through. He that perfected His own Son through sufferings, will bring you to glory by the same path.

Remember, too, you are not your own, but His. You have given yourself up to Him. Why, then, complain that He is doing with you

as He pleaseth? The great law of *sacrifice* is embracing you, and must have its perfect work. Let it be your prayer, then, that your will being crucified, you may offer up yourself to be disposed of as He sees best, whether for joy or sorrow, blessing or chastisement,—to be, to go, to do, to suffer, even as He wills, even as He ordains, even as Christ endured, “who, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God.” Oh, shrink not from any fellowship with your Lord in suffering, who for you “endured the cross, despising the shame,” and is even now preparing for you joys which “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive!” Try to say, it may be with trembling, faltering lips, “O my Saviour, let me be dumb like Thee, and never open my mouth in complaining, whatever be the bitter cup Thou givest me to drink; for it can only be a cup of blessing to Thy redeemed child, for whom Thou hast borne the curse, and exhausted the cup of wrath and indignation.”

Be comforted, too, by the thought that *submission* is pleasing in your Father’s sight. The

sooner you gain the spirit of a child, the sooner will the cross, the trial, the suffering, be removed. Not that you are to try to bear *with patience* in order to be freed from chastisement, but because you will be doing "that which is pleasing to Him;" and when you do, He will enable you to "rejoice with exceeding joy."

And oh, suffering child! will not this help us to be more patient and submissive—the thought that "yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." Then will He give rest to the weary, and consolation to the sorrowful. Their peace shall be as a river, ever flowing; they shall have entered into "the joy of their Lord." No more sin, nor any more guilt, no more penitence, no more trial, no infirmity to depress us, no affection to mislead us, no passion to transport us, no prejudice to blind us, no sloth, no pride, no envy, no strife, but the light of God's countenance, and a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne. That is our *home*. Here we are but on our pilgrimage, our path tangled and thorny, our rest broken and disturbed, our spiritual vision dim and obscured.

Nay more, child of God, thy very sufferings

on earth, so soon to be over, so small compared with thy deservings, so short in duration compared with eternity, "shall work for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Oh! surely this consideration will also *help* to increase your patience under suffering. Your glory is to superabound, as your afflictions have abounded. Your eternal *refreshings* will be measured out to you by the cup of trial you have drunk. God has beaten and hammered you only to make you a vessel unto honour. All sorrow and sighing shall then flee away, and everlasting joy be upon your head. Wherefore then complain because God designs to make thee *very* glorious? Does He injure thee in thus rendering thee meet for a *higher* and *nobler* place in heaven. Impatience and fretfulness can free thee from no other weight but *one*, and that is "an exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Suffering may seem long and weary, and, for the present, grievous; yet it is but a little moment, a twinkling of an eye, compared with the everlasting inheritance of the saints in light, when the days of your mourning shall be ended.

Oh, fear not, trembling believer! Thy

Father knows the weight and duration of thy sorrows and trials. He sees the end from the beginning, and the happy issue out of all your afflictions which He has in store for you. Trust Him, submit to Him ; no sorrow has been mingled in thy cup, no thorn has been scattered on thy path, no grief has oppressed thy spirit, but what "is common to the whole family of God." The Shepherd is leading thee by a circuitous path, but in the right way to His own blessed fold. Leave all to Him—to His faithfulness, His love, His power, His watchful, sleepless care. Let your song be—

"He led me through the wilderness,
A long and lonely way ;
He sooth'd me with His tenderness,
And fed me day by day.

"Oh, better far the wilderness
And desert way to me,
If, wandering in its loneliness,
I should be nearer Thee ! "

As you advance, still trying more and more to submit to your Father's will,—in every fresh trouble imploring fresh grace,—in every onset of the evil heart to resist God's pleasure, crying to Him for help,—your prayer will be answered.

Mercies you do not dream of now will be strewn around your footsteps. Powers which till now have lain as sleeping shadows within you, will awake to life,—powers of faith, of hope, of love, and of that perfect patience and submission which will enable you to lift your streaming eyes to heaven, and say, “Lord, I am Thine; do with me what Thou wilt,—send me what Thou pleasest; only do Thou abide with me.” Then let the shades of evening fall,—let your path be dark and desolate,—let your burden be heavy, your cross painful,—in the surrounding stillness you will hear voices cheering you onward, voices from the everlasting hills, and the sound as of the waving of angels’ wings around you.

One, too, mightier than the angels will make His presence felt; and as you place your trembling hand in His, and cry, “Lord, guide me, for I cannot see,” there will descend a stream of light upon your darkening path, and peace so perfect, that, with songs of praise and thanksgiving, you will pursue your way, willing to wait, willing to endure, willing to do all things and to suffer all things, for His dear sake who is leading you through the valley of

the shadow of death, to the fountains of living waters, to the land of everlasting joy.

O Thou who art the God of patience and consolation, strengthen me in the inner man, that I may bear the yoke and burden of the Lord without murmuring. May I heartily love Thee, entirely confide in Thee, and absolutely resign both soul and body to Thy wise disposal. Lord, I am sensible that I am far from exercising that unreserved submission to Thy will which I ought to exercise. Help me, I beseech Thee, so to trust in Thy infinite goodness and unerring wisdom, that I may be able to say, from my very heart, "Thy will be done." Oh, teach me to be grateful for the manifold comforts allotted me; and support me graciously, that my soul be not cast down and disquieted within me. Assist me to cherish penitent, believing, and serious thoughts and affections, and such meekness and patience as my Divine Master manifested while He was a sufferer on earth. Give me a deep sense of my sinfulness, that I may ever be humbled before Thee, and may feel Thy great mercy and forbearance towards me.

Grant that all Thy dispensations may be sanctified by Thy Holy Spirit, and be instrumental in preparing me for that happy state where peace, and purity, and love are perfected,—where there is no more sin, no strife, no sorrow,—where the former things are passed away, and Thou makest all things new. Hear, gracious Lord, accept, and answer, and bless Thy servant, for Jesus Christ's sake.—AMEN.

REST.

It was Thy will, my Father,
That laid Thy servant low;
It was Thy hand, my Father,
That dealt the chastening blow;
It was Thy mercy bade me rest
My weary soul a while;
And every blessing I receive,
Reflects Thy gracious smile.

It is Thy care, my Father,
That cherishes me now;
It is Thy peace, my Father,
That rests upon my brow;

SUBMISSION.

It is Thy truth, Thy truth alone,
 That gives my spirit rest,
 And soothes me like a happy child
 Upon its mother's breast.

I have known youth, my Father,
 Bright as a summer's day,
 And earthly love, my Father ;
 But that too pass'd away.
Now life's small taper faintly burns—
 A little flickering flame,
 But Thine eternal love remains
 Unchangeably the same.

THE DOVE ON THE CROSS.

SUBMISSION.

Do with me what Thou wilt,
 Submissively and still
I will lie passive in Thy hands ;
 Do Thou thy holy will.
'Tis Thine to choose : my portion let it be
 To acquiesce with deep humility.

Imbue my soul with light;
 My spirit unto Thine
 Unite, and let me thus receive
 Thy Spirit into mine;
 Absorb'd in close communion, let me feel
 The peace of God into my bosom steal.

Thou art the Sanctuary
 Of the regenerate;
 The Hope, the Comforter, the Strength,
 Of the disconsolate.
 Enshrined within Thy presence, let me see
 Thee only, and forget my misery.

THE DOVE ON THE CROSS.

"Hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place. and when thou hearest, forgive."—1 KINGS viii. 30.

And wilt Thou hear my soul's complaint,
 And wilt Thou soothe its fears,
 Support it, Lord, when weak and faint,
 And dry these falling tears?
 Wilt Thou forget to sin how prone
 Its wandering wishes be,
 And this remember, Lord, alone—
 That it was bought by Thee?

And wilt Thou bear with every doubt,
And pardon every sin,
Subdue each fighting from without,
Forgive each fear within?
I know Thou wilt; for thus Thy grace,
Though oft provoked it be,
Reflected from my Saviour's face,
Shines brightest upon me.

J. S. B. MONSELL.

VI.

“Thou art my God.”

PSALM Ixiii. 8.

“ My soul followeth hard after thee.”

AND it is the desire of our heavenly Father that it should. To this He brings *all* His dear children by *one way or other*, that they “ follow hard after Him.” Sometimes He visits them with sore chastisement, and then, with tear-dimmed eyes and bleeding hearts, they cry to Him for mercy, and He wipes their tears away, and gently binds up their wounds, so that they love Him more than ever, and “ follow after Him.” Sometimes He permits a dark cloud to overshadow them,—they become timid and fearful, they cannot realise His presence, and faith, hope, and love begin to languish. Then do they lift up their hearts, exclaiming, “ Lord, send help. Oh, give light, comfort, security ! ” and soon a friendly hand is outstretched, and a loving voice whispers, “ Fear not ! I am with thee still ; ” and with a firm, unfaltering step they “ follow after Him.” Sometimes they be-

come surrounded with difficulties and dangers,— every step of their pathway is trodden with pain; they look around, but can discover no way of escape, till, in answer to the urgent prayer, “Lord, help me,” they are conducted to a quiet resting-spot, and then, permitted by their heavenly Guide to enter an easier path, “they follow hard after Him.” Or it may be that weary months are appointed them, months of sickness and pain, when prayer seems unheard, longing desire unheeded, and the most urgent entreaties appear utterly unavailing. The disease may even take such deep root that the appalling thought comes home, “It is life-long.” Death itself would almost be regarded as a relief, but it comes not. No; the discipline is needed, severe though it be; the child will not be forsaken, for an eye of love rests upon it; the heart will not *utterly* fail, for One will yet strengthen it on the bed of languishing; the soul will not perish, for the Refiner is even now purifying it from its dross. Let “patience have her perfect work,” and then mark the change. Where all was fretfulness, impatience, despondency, there is now submission, calmness, hope. And why? Because the Com-

forter has come. He has revealed the truth, that pardon is more precious than health, God's love more precious than any earthly good, salvation more precious than years of unalloyed worldly happiness and unbroken health. Who shall wonder that the soul thus comforted should desire "to abide under the shadow of the Almighty,"—to have Him ever near,—to bask in the sunshine of His favour,—to hold fast by the everlasting Arm; and knowing, from bitter experience, how impossible it is to tread life's stormy path without such a companion,—how soon the heart woul'd fail, and doubt arise, and temptation beset, and despondency return,—that this should be its language, "O Lord, my soul followeth hard after Thee!"

Reader, what is *your* state? Are you, under the chastening hand of God, pleading hard that He would send relief? Do you know what it is to groan underneath a burden which seems too heavy for you to bear? Oh, be comforted! Turn the eye of faith heavenward, and, if the burden be not removed, you will be abundantly strengthened to carry it. Still pray on; the Lord's time is coming. Believe it, Christian, your trial has been sent in tenderest love. God

has appointed it not only to bring you to *believe* in His love, but also to a *growing enjoyment* of it, that you may long ardently for its possession and “follow hard after Him.” He would have you nearer to Himself, and more like to Himself—holy, as He is holy, not in degree, but in likeness; He would teach you, by His nearness, more entire submission to His will; He would improve your love to Him, which He will do by manifesting His to you. You will yet find the suffering-time a blessed time,—a time of holy freedom with your God and Saviour,—a time of heavenly refreshment from Him such as you never enjoyed when as yet you were unvisited by trial and distant from the cross. Oh, think not that He is indifferent to thy pains and anguish, to thy prayers and tears, to thy longings for help and deliverance. By the very permanence of thy griefs He designs to increase your desires after Him. He would have your prayers yet more urgent, your submission yet more entire, your aspirations yet more heavenly. He sees thee and understands thee better than thou dost thyself; as He made thee, He knows what is in thee—all thy peculiar feelings and thoughts, thy dispositions and likings, thy

strength and thy weakness. He knows what must be rooted out and what engrafted,—what banished and what cherished,—what destroyed and what intensified. And He is working out His own gracious purpose even now,—interesting Himself in all thy fears and anxieties, noting thy very countenance, whether smiling or in tears,—noting thy voice, the beating of thy heart, and thy very breathing. Oh, cling to the assurance that He loves thee,—that thou art one for whom the Saviour offered up His last prayer and sealed it with His precious blood! Oh, if He has given His own Son for thee, how shall He not with Him also freely give thee all things!

Remember, too, that the great Intercessor—your Redeemer, Elder Brother, High Priest, and Mediator—is pleading for you within the veil. Who so well fitted as *He* to sympathise with and strengthen you? He has sorrowed Himself,—groaned beneath the pressure of an anguish in which there was none to share, and for your sake drained the very dregs of the cup of anguish. Let this be the prayer of your heart—

"The cross our Master bore for us, for Him
we fain would bear,
But mortal strength to weakness turns, and
courage to despair!
Then mercy to our failings, Lord, our sinking
faith renew,
And when Thy sorrows visit us, oh send Thy
patience too!"

Oh, make known to Him your case! Go to
Him in your weakness and weariness,—op-
pressed by disease, weighed down by care,—
and be sure you go to One who has Himself
felt oppression and weariness,—One who will
pity you, who forgets not the anguish He en-
dured as the God-man, who remembers what
human weakness is, who will look upon your
beating heart, upon your pale cheek, upon your
anxious brow, and whose very pleadings will
seem to echo within your soul, "O my Father,
have compassion on this poor suppliant! I
once wept. I once was sorrowful. I once en-
dured pain and anguish. Now, Father, even
now, have pity, as Thou once, in the days of
my flesh, hadst pity on me!"

Yes, Jesus is ever the same. His heart is

unchanged—unchangeable. He is passed into the heavens, but He is still the God-man, the God incarnate, and still feels in perfect sympathy and brotherhood with man.

Then, whatever be your cross, whatever your trouble, whatever your anguish, bring it to Jesus. The Father may reject *you*,—His own Son He will not. Your sins may cry aloud for vengeance,—the blood of the slain Lamb will plead louder for mercy. You have no merit to entitle *you* to ask anything, but the Victim of the great atoning sacrifice is still before the throne. You may dread to enter the holy of holies,—the great High Priest still and for ever offers the eternal sacrifice. He is pitiful and faithful. Oh, “follow hard after Him,” for He loves thee still, and He bears upon the palms of His hands, upon His jewelled breast, and upon His swelling heart, the names, and wants, and prayers of His ransomed ones.

O Lord, my heavenly Father, I bow down before Thee to bless Thee for all Thy mercies, and especially for not having dealt with me according to my many sins. Pardon, I beseech Thee, for Thy Son Jesus Christ’s sake, all the

offences of my past life, and enable me to believe in Him to the salvation of my soul. Increase my longing after conformity to my Divine Redeemer, and may the remembrance of His marvellous love, and grace, and mercy incline my heart to follow hard after Him. Blessed Jesus! Thy followers and people have the assurance of Thine own gracious declaration, that whatsoever they shall ask in Thy name, they will receive it. O Saviour of the world! I humbly ask of Thee more love, more grace, more faith and trust in Thee. Help me to cling to Thee. In the darkest hour may I realise Thy presence; in the time of greatest danger may I hear Thy voice; and when my faith begins to fail, oh let Thy strengthening arm uphold me. Remember, O Lord, the word unto Thy servant in which Thou hast caused me to hope, and answer me according to the multitude of Thy mercies.—**AMEN.**

"My soul followeth hard after thee."—PSALM lxiii. 8.

Give me, O Lord, whate'er my lot may be,
A heart to look to, and to lean on Thee;
Teach me the thing that pleaseth Thee to do,
And make my life to my profession true.

Let me, my Saviour, on Thy breast recline,
Thy words my comfort, my devotion Thine;
My life's best joy Thy promises to prove,
Trust in Thy truth, and triumph in Thy love.

J. S. B. M.

"Walk in love."—EPH. v. 2.

Lord, give me grace that I may be
Thine, with such soul-sincerity,
That wheresoe'er my steps may move,
My first, last thought may be Thy love.

Lord, let my morn and evening prayer
Be in Thy strength, and for Thy care;
That neither day nor night be past,
So as to grieve me at the last.

But while I watch and pray, lest sin
 Surprise my soul and enter in
 To rob me of my present joy,
 And all my hopes of heaven destroy—

Let my first fear be lest I grieve
 The grace that taught me to believe;
 Let my last care be, not to prove
 Ungrateful for Thy saving love.

J. S. B. M.

God! Thou art my rock of strength,
 And my home is in Thine arms;
 Thou wilt send me help at length,
 And I feel no wild alarms.
 Sin nor death can pierce the shield
 Thy defence has o'er me thrown;
 Up to Thee myself I yield,
 And my sorrows are Thine own.

Thou my shelter from the blast,
 Thou my strong defence art ever;
 Though my sorrows thicken fast,
 Yet I know Thou leav'st me never.

When my foe puts forth his might,
And would tread me in the dust,
To this rock I take my flight,
And I conquer him through trust.

When my trials tarry long,
Unto Thee I look and wait,
Knowing none, though keen and strong,
Can my faith in Thee abate.
And this faith I long have nurst,
Comes alone, O God, from Thee;
Thou my heart didst open first,
Thou didst set this hope in me.

Christians, cast on Him your load,
To your tower of refuge fly;
Know He is the living God,
Ever to His creatures nigh.
Seek His ever open door
In your hours of utmost need;
All your hearts before Him pour,
He will send you help with speed.

Yea, on Thee, my God, I rest,
Letting life float calmly on,
For I know the last is best,
When the crown of joy is won.

In Thy might all things I bear,
In Thy love find bitters sweet;
And, with all my grief and care,
Sit in patience at Thy feet.

LYRA GERMANICA

VII.

The Remembrancer.

Job xiii. 26.

"Thou writest bitter things against me."

SICKNESS is often a painful remembrancer. The past, which seemed forgotten, comes back with its train of omissions and commissions, promises and vows, which never were fulfilled—privileges and warnings which passed by unimproved—and solemn knockings at the chamber of the soul which made only a slight and momentary impression. Have we never realised this? Have not our hearts trembled at the revived record of other days? But oh, what is *our* recollection when compared with the omniscience of God! He has seen and recorded thoughts and words and deeds from our very childhood. To Him all hearts are open, and from Him no secrets are hid. He has watched our every movement, and there has not been within us a secret purpose, a sinful desire, an unholy thought, which has escaped His notice. How often has He warned us when we were treading the path of

sin,—warned us by His providence and by His grace,—warned us by His word and ministers,—warned us by blighted hopes and shattered plans,—warned us by threatening to snap asunder the frail cord of life, and terminate for ever the possibility of a return to Him! Well may our hearts fail us when we consider what “bitter things” God has written against us. “When I called ye did not answer,”—“They would none of my counsel; they despised all my reproof,”—“They hearkened not, but hardened their neck,”—“Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.” Oh, how often these “bitter things” have been written against us! And every year has added to their number and aggravation, for every year we owed it to the mercy and forbearance of God that He did not cut us off in the midst of our sins. Blessed be God, dark as the record has been,—stained with the blackest ingratitude, and foul and polluted as it must have appeared to “Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,” we are not abandoned to despair! No; there is hope—hope in the crucified Saviour, hope in His precious blood, hope in His all-sufficient atonement, hope in His all-prevailing intercession. Lamb of God! we would turn to

Thee! By Thine agony and bloody sweat, by Thy cross and passion, by Thy precious death and burial, by Thy glorious resurrection and ascension, we do beseech Thee have mercy upon us!

“ Is there forgiveness in our Father’s home?
Are penitential tears regarded there?
Will Jesus ever say, Thy lost ones come
To seek Thy pardon and Thy home to share?

“ Father, I know that Thy forgiving love
Hails with delight a contrite sinner’s tear:
And Thou wilt welcome to Thy home above,
A child to whom the Saviour’s name is dear.”

Yes, fellow-sufferers, let our ground of hope be in Christ, the Daysman between God and us,—the Mediator who for our sakes was nailed to the accursed tree,—the mighty Intercessor who pleads for us at the Father’s right hand. “ Bitter things” have been written against us, and we have no words, no merits of our own to plead; we are “ poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked : ” “ nothing in our hands we bring—simply to the cross we cling.” But there we cannot perish. Deep as is the

mountain of our guilt, deeper, far deeper is that ocean of infinite love in which God has promised to bury it for ever, and to remember it no more against us. O mercy unspeakable ! These "bitter things" let us mourn over, let us cherish at their recollection that "godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of;" let us grieve because we ever sinned against a God so gracious, merciful, and compassionate,—against a Saviour so loving, tender, and sympathising,—against a Holy Spirit so patient, and gentle, and forbearing. Let us pray for grace to serve our God with more fidelity, that in everything we may seek to please Him, that our inmost hearts may be given up to Him, and that we may present "our bodies and spirits as living sacrifices unto Him, which is our reasonable service."

And in our present season of sickness and suffering, let us resolve to take cheerfully whatever God may see meet to appoint. Pain, and distress, and sorrow are what we have justly merited, but "the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy." He may have compassion upon us, and send relief. Having cast all our care on Him, let us believe that He careth for us, that

He has, and can have, no other object in His dealings towards us but simply and solely that of making us holy and happy for ever. Not that pain and sorrow have of themselves the power to make us so; they naturally irritate and vex the spirit; but, by God's blessing, suffering is made the means of carrying on His cure within us. Under the leading of His grace, sorrow draws us to Him who can alone renew and sanctify the heart; it will bring us to Him who is the true and only Purifier—who will bend our wills to His will,—so that we shall love what He loves, and choose what He chooses,—and make us such as He would have us to be. Then will we wait patiently for Him, and seek His purifying Spirit, and cling to the cross of Jesus, and we will not desire to escape any of God's corrections or judgments, feeling that by this we would only be escaping one great means of preparing us for future blessedness. And, whatever our lot on earth may be, is it not better than we deserve? Amidst all our troubles, have we not much to be thankful for? There are sadder hearts than ours, heavier burdens, and more painful agonies.

Besides, God means to draw us to Himself,

and He will do it in His own way. He made us for eternity, and His aim in all He does is to bring us happily into it. Hence the necessity of pain, sickness, crosses, to break the strong chain which binds us to the world, and to induce us to take part with God in His grand design. He will draw us, and securely lead us to Himself, in a way contrary to all our natural will, until He have divested us thereof, and consumed and made it thoroughly subject unto the Divine will. For this is His design—that we should cease to regard our own wishes or dislikes; that it should become a small matter whether He give or take away, whether we have health or sickness, joy or sorrow, *if only* we may receive and apprehend God himself; that whether things please or displease us, we may leave all things to take their course and cleave to Him. The “poor in spirit” are those who humbly take from day to day what God sends them, who are thankful for what they have, and think it far more than they deserve.

Reader, endeavour then to be an example of patience and thankfulness. If a murmuring word, or repining thought, arise in your mind, look by faith upon your dying Saviour, and ask

your own heart, “Was not His suffering more painful than the bed on which I lie? and He endured it that the ‘bitter things’ recorded against me might be blotted out for ever!” This, believe it, is the only true foundation of peace of soul and content of mind,—that our peace is made with God by Jesus Christ His only Son, who has taken our sins upon Himself, and borne the punishment of them, and who in exchange has given us His righteousness, by which we are made righteous before God. Oh, then, feel assured that God loves you too dearly to send anything that would harm you! The Saviour has pleaded for you,—is now pleading for you; and what you will receive must be a “blessing.” It may not seem so to you; it may appear a punishment, as if those “bitter things” had roused the anger of God against you; but it is not so. You are “chastened of the Lord, that you may not be condemned with the world.” Trials are sent in tenderest love. Receive them, then, meekly from your Father’s gracious hands. Pray that He would hallow them to you,—that He would by them work out His own blessed purpose in you, and impress daily more and more the likeness of the ever-blessed Saviour. Banish

the first risings of doubt, as if God were unkind or unmindful of you. He knows every throb of thy brow, each hardly-drawn breath, each beating of the fevered pulse, each sinking of the aching head, and He says to you—

“Take thou thy cross, my son; nor mayst thou choose;

The cross I give is best; do not refuse.

Renounce thy will; seek nothing of thine own;
Follow thou Me; thou canst not walk alone.”

Heavenly Father, give me grace at all times to trust Thy love, and to receive thankfully what Thou sendest. Lord, I am not worthy of the least of Thy mercies. I have sinned, and done very wickedly. My transgressions are more than can be numbered, and the remembrance of them is very grievous to me. But Thou, O God, art rich in mercy. For the sake of Thy dear Son, my Saviour Jesus Christ, do Thou forgive mine iniquities, and remember them no more against me for ever. Oh, increase my love of holiness! Let the mind that was in Christ be also in me. Transform me by Thy Holy Spirit into His blessed image, so that I may

love what Thou lovest, and choose what Thou choosest, and make it my meat and drink to do Thy holy will. Grant that I may ever bear with patience the discipline I am called to undergo, assured that Thou wilt not leave me nor forsake me, and that all things will be ordered for my happiness and well-being throughout eternity.

Give me grace, O God, to glorify Thee in time, that I may enjoy Thee for evermore. And all I ask is for the sake of Jesus Christ my Saviour.—AMEN.

O Saviour, let my wearied spirit rest
Beneath the shadow of Thy cross, and send
Sweet thoughts of peace to soothe my troubled
breast,
And o'er my soul their dove-like wings ex-
tend.

Where shall I cast the burden of my life,
The burden of my sins, if not on Thee?
My soul is grieved and wearied with the strife
Of this rude world; receive and comfort me.

Beneath the shadow of the cross, Thy child
Shall find a refuge and a calm retreat,
Where sainted souls, with Heaven reconciled,
Await the hour when earth and heaven meet.

J. E. B.

HOLY TEARS.

Yes, thou mayst weep, for Jesus shed
Such tears as those thou sheddest now,
When, for the living or the dead,
Sorrow lay heavy on His brow.

He sees thee weep, yet doth not blame*
The weakness of thy flesh and heart;
Thy human nature is the same
As that in which He took a part.

He knows its weakness; for He felt
The crushing power of pain and woe;
How body, soul, and spirit melt,
And faint beneath the stunning blow.

What, if poor sinners count thy grief
The sign of an unchasten'd will?
He who can give thy soul relief,
Knows that thou art submissive still.

Turn thee to Him, to Him alone;
For all that our poor lips can say
To soothe thee, broken-hearted one,
Would fail to comfort thee to-day.

We will not speak to thee, but sit
In prayerful silence by thy side ;
Grief has its ebbs and flows ; 'tis fit
Our love should wait the ebbing tide.

Jesus himself will comfort thee
In His own time, in His own way ;
And haply more than "two or three"
Unite in prayer for thee to-day.

J. E. B.

Blessed Saviour, wilt Thou now,
From Thy throne of glory bow ?
Wilt Thou from Thy starry sphere,
Sinners' sorrow stoop to hear ?
Wilt Thou wash them in the blood
Of the suffering Lamb of God ?

By Thy cross and passion save us ;
By the hope those sufferings gave us ;
By Thine agony and sweat ;
By Thy prayers on Olivet ;

By Thy sighs and by Thy tears ;
By Thy people's hopes and fears ;
By the peace vouchsafed to Thee
When in dark Gethsemane !

By the sacramental tide
Gushing from Thy wounded side ;
By the load of others' sin,
That oppress'd Thy soul within ;
By the wondrous love Thou bore us,
That by death Thou shouldst restore us ;—
By that mercy and that love,
Hear us, Lord, in heaven above !

In the midnight of our sadness,
In the noontide of our gladness ;
Through each changing scene of life,
Calm and sunshine, storm and strife ;
At the last dread parting hour,
In Thy judgment's might and power—

Lord, deliver and defend us ;
Let Thy Spirit still attend us ;
Be Thy smile our beacon star,
Glimmering through the gloom afar,
Here,—the surety Thou art nigh,
There,—the blest reality !

PARISH MUSINGS.

VIII

Not Forsaken.

MATTHEW xiv. 23, 24.

"When the evening was come, he was there alone. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary."

THE narrative of which these words form a part has often been a source of great comfort to the tried and suffering believer. Every little incident is of priceless value, as it brings more and more fully home to the heart the tender sympathy of Jesus, His sleepless care, His ready help, His almighty power. We are told that, at the close of a busy and anxious day, when our Lord had miraculously fed five thousand persons with five loaves and two fishes,—when the people, astonished at His power, had resolved to make Him their king,—He "constrained His disciples to get into a ship, and to go before Him unto the other side" of the sea of Galilee, whilst He Himself retired to a mountain to pray. Suddenly a violent tempest arose. The terrified disciples plied their oars, but in vain. Their little bark was "in the midst of

the sea, tossed with waves," the plaything of the storm, and "the wind was contrary." Darkness gathered round them, and, worse than all, they were *alone*; for "Jesus had not come unto them."

Fit representation of the believer still! How often has he to encounter, and that, too, at his Master's bidding, the stormy gales of trouble? The ocean of life, how suddenly is it lashed into fury, and, despite all our efforts, our feeble bark is driven to and fro! It has been thus with Christ's disciples in every age. He has promised to deliver them *out* of the storm, but not to secure them from encountering it. "The same afflictions have been accomplished in the brotherhood" of faith since time began. The saints in glory *all* toiled, amid similar billows, in life's stormy sea. Though never shipwrecked, they were *all* tempest-tossed. Think of their bitter disappointments, their grievous losses, their perplexing cares, their fearful sufferings, their painful trials, their cruel mockings and scourgings, their buffetings and imprisonments and deaths, as they are recorded for our instruction in the Book of God! The Elder Brother Himself did not escape. He was made like to

His brethren,—in all points tempted like as we are. What a dread night,—what a fearful tempest was that in which He was constrained in the bitterness of His anguished soul to cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

While the trembling disciples were battling with the waves on the lonely sea, the Saviour was alone with His Father, pleading for them on the mount. He had not forgotten them. His all-seeing eye followed them in the gloom of night, and amid the furious waves. And even so He pleads for *thee*, tempest-tossed believer. Think not that, because the storm continues boisterous, He intercedes in vain. Him the Father heareth always. Thy not sinking proves that His advocacy prevails. He prays not that your day may never be stormy, but, in answer to His intercession, you may be confident that “as your day so shall your strength be.” His eye of love rests upon you. There cannot be a night so dark in which He cannot trace your course. As on that lone mountain-height He “saw the disciples toiling in rowing,” so in the heights of glory He sees *thee* also, storm-driven

Christian. Every secret anxiety, every heart-buried grief, is watched from His throne on high. He knows all thy difficulties, sorrows, and temptations. Thou shalt not perish by any oversight of His. When He sees that the fitting season has arrived, He will appear for thy deliverance.

He *foresaw* the toil and danger of His disciples on the Sea of Galilee. He purposely sent them away that they might be tossed. He who could have prevented their sufferings by His power, permitted them in His wisdom, that He might glorify His mercy in their deliverance, and confirm their faith by the issue of their distresses. Even so, Christian, He *permits thy sorrows*. Every night of pain and sickness, every wave of trouble that rolls over thee, comes at His command. He knows that they are necessary, and He has told thee to expect them. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." The experience of believers of all ages testifies that

"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown."

They may continue long, and appear over-

whelmingly great. How did all things seem to conspire against the fearful disciples! The night was sullen and dark,—their Master was absent,—the sea was boisterous,—the winds were high and contrary. Had their Master been with them, however wildly the elements might rage, they would have felt secure; had their Master been absent, still if the sea had been quiet or the wind favourable, the passage might have been endured; now, both season, and sea, and wind, and their Master's desertion combined to render them miserable. And thus sometimes the providence of God appoints that no glimpse of comfort shall appear to gladden the trembling heart; troubles surround us on every side, we are beaten back by opposing doubts and fears; and eagerly as we look out through the pitchy gloom no ray of comfort darts across it—all is thick, impenetrable darkness. Oh, how often do our hearts fail within us, and we begin to cry, "Lord, why hast Thou forsaken me? why do these storms beat upon me? wherefore dost Thou not hearken to my cry and come to my help?"

"Hearken to thy cry," O child of God! He has heard it *already*. Yes, amid the songs of

angels and the anthems of adoring hosts, thy feeble voice has reached the courts of heaven. He who loves thee with more than a brother's love *is* even now watching *thee*,—noting thy sorrows, caring for thy griefs, sympathising in all thy pains and sufferings.

He *will* assuredly “come to thy help.” He delays for the wisest and best reasons. His present intercession has gained much for thee. It has enabled you to struggle on *till now*,—it has given you strength to resist despair,—it has kept you praying, wrestling, entreating,—and soon it will accomplish more, far more. Take it as the pledge that Jesus loves you, when, though the storm has continued to rage, and the calm has been delayed, the waves have not been allowed to overwhelm you. His time is the best time. Yet a little while and the hour of deliverance will arrive. Yet a little while, and you will have rest, and peace, and quiet. You will find that it was good for you to have been afflicted,—that your faith was strengthened by trial,—that your progress heavenward, instead of being retarded, was hastened by the storm,—that the winds you dreaded were wafting you onward in your voyage, and that the waves which

seemed to threaten you with death were bearing you to the haven of eternal calm.

Oh, then, whatever be your present state, whatever the cares, and troubles, and griefs which burden your spirit, whatever the darkness which has been permitted to enwrap you, strive ever to feel that He who has for a season seemed to leave you all alone on a stormy sea,—He who has spoken to the tempest, and allowed the waves to rear their foaming crests, is even now pleading for you on the mount,—even now watching you, till the hour arrive when He shall say, “Peace, be still;” and drawing near to you, shall whisper these consoling words, “It is I; be not afraid.”

Be this your earnest prayer to Jesus:—

“ Amidst the roaring of the sea,
My soul still hangs her hopes on Thee;
Thy constant love, Thy faithful care,
Is all that saves me from despair.

“ Though tempest-tost, and half a wreck,
My Saviour through the floods I seek;
Let neither winds nor stormy main
Force back my shatter’d bark again.”

Heavenly Father, give me grace to trust in Thee at all times. Thou knowest what is best for Thy sinful creatures, and in Thy wisdom designest good to them by affliction. Teach me to acknowledge the mercy of Thy dispensations, and the advantages of a bed of sickness. Make me to rejoice in the means which Thou hast employed for strengthening my faith, increasing my love of prayer, and bringing me to a sense of my own utter helplessness. Oh, grant that in the midst of my distress I may be able to feel assured that my Saviour is interceding for me, and that in His own good time He will appear for my help and deliverance. Suffer me not to give way to fear and despondency, or to fall into despair. Give me patience under my sufferings, and a hearty resignation to Thy will. Mercifully hear me, O my Father, and give me that peace which Thou hast promised to those whose hearts are set on Thee; for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was once a man of sorrows, and is still touched with a feeling of our infirmities; to whom, as our merciful High Priest, be glory for ever.—AMEN.

Though strange and winding seem the way
While yet on earth I dwell,
In heaven my heart shall gladly say,
Thou, God, dost all things well!

Take courage, then, my soul, nor steep
Thy days and nights in tears ;
Soon shalt thou cease to mourn and weep,
Though dark are now thy fears.

He comes, He comes, the strong to save,
He comes, nor tarries more ;
His light is breaking o'er the wave,
The clouds and storms are o'er.

LYRA GERMANICA.

Shades of coming woe surround us,
Springing up on every side ;
Spread Thy sheltering wings around us,
That in peace we may abide.

Darker now they gather o'er us,
 Like the shadows of Thy rod,
 Stretching down the path before us,
 And we tremble, mighty God.

Suffer not our feet to stumble,
 Suffer not our steps to slide ;
 Keep us lowly, keep us humble,
 And be Thou Thyself our guide.

J. E. B.

PROSPERITY.

Shew me the way, O Lord,
 And make it plain ;
 I would obey Thy word,
 Speak yet again ;
 I will not take one step until I know
 Which way it is that Thou wouldest have me go.

O Lord, I cannot see—
 Vouchsafe me light ;
 The mist bewilders me,
 Impedes my sight ;
 Hold Thou my hand, and lead me by Thy side ;
 I dare not go alone, be Thou my guide.

If I have lost my way,

Oh, set me right !

If going now astray,

Hold my hand tight ;

This labyrinth is intricate and long,

Shew me the right path, lest I choose the wrong.

I cannot see Thy face,

Though Thou art near ;

When will the morning chase

Away my fear ?

When shall I see the place where day and night

Exist not, for Thy glory is its light ?

I will be patient, Lord,

Trustful and still ;

I will not doubt Thy word —

My hopes fulfil.

How can I perish, clinging to Thy side,

My Comforter, my Saviour, and my Guide ?

J. E. B.

Why, my soul, so sad and fearful,

Crossing life's dark ocean tide ?

Why that upward eye so tearful ?

Christ is sleeping by thy side !

H

Though the storm and tossing billow
Seem the only presence near,
Christ is nearer, on a pillow
Sleeping by thee—wherefore fear?

Wakes the storm?—it is to try thee!
Sleeps the Christ?—'tis for thy sake!
Let the heart but feel Him nigh thee,
Lift thy voice, and He'll awake.

He'll awake, and wind and ocean
Soon shall bow before His will;
All thy weary heart's emotion
Hush'd before His “Peace, be still.”

IX.

Be not Afraid.

MATE. xiv. 26, 27.

"And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit: and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid."

DURING a long and tempestuous night, the disciples had to struggle against the stormy billows. Doubtless they felt weary, oppressed, well-nigh hopeless; but even then it was that deliverance was vouchsafed. After having been driven all night long,—not so much by storms and waves as by their own anxious, troubled thoughts,—in the fourth watch (which was near to the morning) Jesus came to them; and so strange and unexpected was the sight, that, instead of joy, their first emotion was terror—"they cried out for fear," they did not recognise their Deliverer, but imagined that they saw a spirit. Yet He had purposely delayed His coming that He might exercise their patience,—that He might teach them to wait upon Divine Providence in cases of extremity,—that their devotions

might be more whetted by delay,—and that they might more gladly welcome their deliverance.

For the selfsame purpose Jesus often delays His coming to His disciples still. He permits sorrow upon sorrow to come upon them. He leaves them in pain, and sickness, and anguish till they are, as it were, in the depth of extremity. It is the *fourth* watch with them ; but the storm still rages, the darkness continues, and their Protector, their Friend, is not nigh. Oh, how often in such a dreary hour has Jesus come to His disciples,—come to them amid the gloom, walking in majesty upon the stormy wave,—come to them that He might say as of old on the Sea of Galilee, “It is I; be not afraid.”

Yes, Christian, could we ask those blessed ones who are now hymning His praises above, “When was it that the Saviour was felt most precious by you?” oh, they would answer, “’Twas in the dreary night of our suffering, when we lay helpless, hopeless,—’twas in the hour of extremity, when there seemed no prospect of deliverance,—’twas in the hour of sore distress, when our hearts were torn with anguish, and our prayers had become intensely urgent, and we felt that if He did not help us, ‘vain

was the help of man,'—'twas even then that the blessed Jesus revealed Himself, calmed our fears, and bade us be of good cheer."

Or ask, if you will, that patient sufferer, at whose calmness you have often wondered, and whose language is ever that of child-like submission and acquiescence to the will of God,—ask the same question, and you will be told, "Never did I feel my Lord so dear, never did I realise His love, His power, His grace, so fully as on my bed of languishing, when He came to me in the night-watches, and permitted me to unbosom myself to Him, and rest my weary head upon His breast. Oh, it was then He promised to be ever near me, to strengthen me under suffering, to give me patience to endure my Father's will, and to make His 'grace sufficient' for me. I know that He sends me trial,—that He has commissioned this sickness,—that He minglest the cup which I have to drink, and I know also that these things are needed for my soul's welfare. Shall I not then welcome what is sent me in love, when I know and have the assurance that in every hour when my suffering is greatest, my pain most agonising, my trouble most grievous and bur-

densome, Jesus will come to my help,—come to encourage and strengthen me,—come to shew me what He has suffered for my sake,—to tell me that the sorrows which oppress my soul weighed more heavily on His,—that the foes I have to battle with more fiercely assailed Him,—that I but *taste* the bitter cup, whilst He had to drain it,—that there fall on me only a few drops of the mighty tempest which spent its rage on Him,—and that as He ‘learned obedience by the things He suffered,’ so His grace will enable me to do it also.” Thus have God’s children found that suffering times were blessed times,—that they never had such nearness to their Father, such holy freedom with Him, and such heavenly comforts from Him, as under the cross; it only took away what checked the current of His love, His peace, His joy in their hearts. The cross, be it what it may,—pain, sickness, calamity, loss of friends, fortune, fame,—is the greatest blessing on this side heaven, because by it the Father keeps the children in the closest communion that they have with Him on earth,—by it He purges them, makes them fruitful, and partakers of His holiness,—by it He crucifies the life of sense, deadens them to

the world, and mortifies their lusts and passions; and by it, as the outward man perishes, the inward man is renewed day by day. They receive new life, new strength, new comfort, new peace,—they become more and more conformed to the First-born among many brethren, both *in* suffering and *by* suffering,—they tread the steps of those who have “entered into rest,” and come up “from the wilderness leaning on the arm of the Beloved.”

Christian, take comfort when you think of the mighty cloud of witnesses who would thus testify to your Saviour’s constant care and unchanging love. Think on what He has already done for you. He groaned, bled, and died for you. You were lost, but He found you,—an enemy, but He reconciled you,—a captive, but He freed you,—blind, but He cured you,—dead, but He quickened you. Oh! when you reflect how He has watched over you since you have received the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus,—how He has preserved you from dangers, succoured you in seasons of temptation, supported you in times of trial, cherished you in days of sickness, comforted you in the hours of despondency,—you cannot surely imagine that

He will now desert you,—you cannot believe that He will so mar the work of His own hands—the labour of His own love—as to cast you off, and leave you to perish. If He sought you when a stranger, will He not take care of you when a child? If the enemy was loved, how much more the friend? Will He refuse to answer the prayers He himself has prompted,—to fulfil the hopes He himself has inspired,—to honour the confidence He himself has encouraged,—and to complete the work He himself has begun? Oh no! Learn to have more confidence in your Saviour,—more reliance upon Him who has said, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee,”—more dependence upon Him who poured out His precious blood to reconcile you to God.

Let your feeling ever be—

“Thou didst it, who art gone on high,
Where many mansions be,
There to prepare a glorious home,
And deathless friends for me.
Shall I rebel against the love
That fits me for my home above?

Ah no! e'en through this load of fears
My heart is springing up,
To thank Thee for the boundless grace
That overflows my cup!"

Your suffering may now be great,—your days and nights may be full of anxiety and restlessness,—the star of hope may even be obscured by the mists of darkness which surround you; yet, take courage! You are meeting the storm which the Saviour himself has permitted to rage; you are battling with elements which He can in a moment control; you are passing through a night through which has already passed the Man of Sorrows; and soon He will come to you. That voice which never speaks in vain will command the storm to cease: Your best, your dearest Friend—the “Consolation of Israel”—will say to you, “‘Be of good cheer;’ I know how thou hast borne and suffered during these weary hours. I know every trial through which you have passed, and which the world has never known—sorrows which could not, and ought not, to be communicated but to Me alone. I know your every prayer for guidance—your every effort to bear well and patiently what I

have laid upon you, and to profit by the visitation. From the calm shores of the land of everlasting life have I watched thee, my trembling disciple, toiling through the waves of this troublesome world; and now I have come to thee upon the billows, that I may be near thee in the time of extremest peril; and, behold, I am with thee in the ship! Fear not; they who follow me shall never walk in darkness; thy footsteps shall not slip; mercy shall hold thee up when dangers encompass thee about; and though the sunshine of this world's joys be dim for thee, in My light shalt thou see light."

"Oh thou who mournest on thy way,
With longings for the close of day,
He walks with thee, that Saviour kind,
And gently whispers, 'Be resign'd;
Bear up—bear on—the end shall tell
Thy Lord doth order all things well.'"

Oh, then, afflicted one, be not cast down, neither be dismayed. Faint not under your sorrows; but strive to wear out your three watches of tribulation with undaunted patience and holy resolution. Let songs of praise arise from the ark in which you are securely borne

along amidst the raging storm: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble: therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Though deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy water-spouts, and all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me; yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the day time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life. O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee? Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

Let these strains mingle with the roaring of the storm, and the dashing of the angry billows, and soon the ear of faith will hear, louder than the loud wind, those accents which have so often calmed the fears, and stilled the apprehensions of

Christ's trembling disciples: "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted! I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee. Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name: thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour."

Be not Thou far from me, O Lord; for trouble is near. Fearfulness and trembling have taken hold upon me; let Thy strength come in to support me. The sorrows of death compass me. Look upon mine affliction and my pain, and forgive all my sins. Help me, O Lord, for Thou art my hope. Appear for me when all human help faileth. Make haste to help me. Give me patience to bear all my sufferings, and quietly to wait Thy time for relief. Thou takest pleasure in them that hope in Thy mercy. Oh, in-

crease my faith; sustain my hope in Thee. Forsake me not when my strength faileth. If Thou, Lord, wilt be pleased to support me, nothing will be too heavy for me. Oh, make Thy strength perfect in my weakness. Thou who delightest in mercy, save me for Thy mercy's sake. Thou hast said Thou wilt not contend for ever, neither wilt Thou be always wroth; for the spirit should fail before Thee, and the souls which Thou hast made. Oh, turn Thee unto me and have mercy upon me, for the sake of Thy well-beloved Son Jesus Christ.—AMEN.

“IT IS I; BE NOT AFRAID.”

Loud was the wind, and wild the tide;
The ship her course delay'd:
The Lord came to their help, and cried,
“ ‘Tis I; be not afraid.”

Who walks the waves in wondrous guise,
By Nature's laws unstay'd?
“ ‘Tis I,” a well-known voice replies—
“ ‘Tis I; be not afraid.”

He mounts the deck—down lulls the sea,
The tempest is allay'd;

The prostrate crew adore ; and He
Exclaims, " Be not afraid."

Thus, when the storm of life is high,
Come, Saviour, to my aid ;
Come, when no other help is nigh,
And say, " Be not afraid."

Speak, and my griefs no more are heard ;
Speak, and my fears are laid ;
Speak, and my soul shall bless the word,
" 'Tis I ; be not afraid."

When on the bed of death I lie,
And stretch my hands for aid,
Stand Thou before my glazing eye,
And say, " Be not afraid."

Before Thy judgment-seat above,
When nature sinks dismay'd,
Oh, cheer me with a word of love—
" 'Tis I ; be not afraid."

Worlds may around to wreck be driven,
If then I hear it said,
By Him who rules through earth and heaven,
" 'Tis I ; be not afraid."

H. F. LYTE.

“IT IS I; BE NOT AFRAID.”

“It is I; be not afraid,”
Thus our loving Saviour said,
When, in human flesh array’d,
Winds and sea His voice obey’d.

“It is I,”—oh, fear not ye,
Face the tempest-troubled sea;
Mine the power, and mine the will,
My love eternal—“Peace, be still.”

“It is I,”—I bid thee come;
Though rough the way, it leadeth home,
My hand is strong to bear thee out,
O faithless, “wherefore dost thou doubt?”

“It is I,”—when deeply feeling
Your need of Jesus’ perfect healing,
Already hath the plague been stay’d,
Oh, “fear not, neither be dismay’d.”

“It is I,”—when worn by pain,
You strive to frame your prayers in vain,
Omniscient, I thy *wishes* know,
Omnipotent, can *all* bestow.

“It is I,”—though doubts prevail,
And though secret fears assail,
In love and pity, as of old,
I’ll keep thee safe within my fold.

“It is I,”—the Way, the Truth,
The Strength of age, the Guide of youth,
The sinner’s Friend, my loved one’s Shield,
“Look unto me, and be ye heal’d.”

J. B.

When ease and quiet are our lot,
Our hearts grow hard and cold ;
Our God and all His love forgot,
We wander from His fold ;
But when His tempests sweep our sky,
His wrath we dare not brave ;
We stoop beneath the blast, and cry,
“Arise, our God, and save !”

Lord, grant that ever in my breast
Such dread of sin may be,
That I may never dream of rest
Or peace, except in Thee ;

That 'neath the calmest, brightest sky
Thy mercy ever gave,
This heart may dread sin's storm, and cry,
“Arise, my God, and save!”

PARISH MUSINGS.

“IT IS I; BE NOT AFRAID.”

Saviour! when wildest storms of care
Would sink my heart in deep despair,
Oh, let me hear Thy voice declare,
'Tis I—be not afraid!

Say to my troubled soul, 'Tis I!
Love rides upon the gloomy sky:
Not wrath, nor chance, nor destiny—
'Tis I—be not afraid!

When wave on wave assails thy bark,
When frightful forms howl through the dark,
Amid the tempest's roaring—hark!
'Tis I—be not afraid!

'Tis I—thy steadfast loving Friend!
Round thee my arms of might extend;
My words with the loud thunder blend—
'Tis I—be not afraid!

For thee I once was tempest-driven ;
With hostile wind I too have striven ;
Grief keener far my soul hath riven—
'Tis I—be not afraid !

Human like thee, I sympathise ;
Divine, I rule the stormy skies ;
Lift up thine heart, and wipe thine eyes—
'Tis I—be not afraid !

I come to bid the waves be still,
Thy anxious soul with peace to fill,
And turn to good each seeming ill—
'Tis I—be not afraid !

The gale shall speed thee on thy way,
The lightning lend a helpful ray,
The dark more quickly bring the day—
'Tis I—be not afraid !

Soon shall the storm be changed to calm,
The oar of toil to conqueror's palm,
The prayer of fear to rapture's psalm—
'Tis I—be not afraid !

In heaven shall roll no stormy sea ;
Thy peace shall there unbroken be :
At home eternally with Me—
Thou ne'er shalt be afraid !

X.

If Need be.

1 PETER I. 6.

"Though now for a season, (*if need be,*) ye are in heaviness."

OF all things, the most difficult is to realise truly "the need be" for our own personal trials. We see it readily in the case of another, although our judgment is often very erroneous. We will quickly discover how cold and indifferent he had become,—how the world had been gaining the mastery over him,—how his time and talents were being spent far too much in caring for things seen and temporal. But when it comes to our own turn,—when we are compelled, as it were, to open up some pages in the "book of the heart," and find there many charges against us, we are seldom at a loss to find excuses. "True, we have not been so diligent as we used to be, but then, how many necessary cares have taken hold upon us; true, we have been less fervent in prayer, less frequently in our closet, but we have been regular in attending the house of God, we have not failed in the external duties

of religion. And then, our trials are so much heavier than those of others, who are careless, indifferent, avowed worldlings." In short, we inwardly think that our lot is a very *hard* one,—that our cross is the most painful,—our suffering the most agonising,—our path the most thorny. And all this arises from the fact that we have not discovered the "need be."

How could we? At the best, our spiritual eyesight is weak and dim. We cannot know the real state of our souls, or see them as He does, whose searching scrutiny detects the slightest symptom of disease. We fancy all is well when we are sick, wounded, ready to die. We imagine that all is right with the heart, when faith is weak, love cold, hope almost obscured. Only gradually, after having been *long* in the school of trial, do we *begin* to realise that the Physician *must* probe the wound within us, and apply severe remedies, and cause pain and anguish, in order to cure the malady which is preying upon us,—only after we have passed through the trying ordeal, and feel that the pulse is beating more regularly, and the blood is coursing through the system with a healthier flow,—only *then* can we rightly comprehend our former

weakness, and thank God that in tender love He cared for us, not hesitating to inflict pain, not withdrawing His hand, not sparing the rod, that He might do us good in the end.

Christian, just reflect for a little on some of the "needs be" for affliction and trial. Only a few can we here discover: in eternity we may hope they will all be revealed to us, but now "we see through a glass darkly."

"If need be," affliction will be sent for the purpose of bringing us to *realise* whether our religion be genuine or not. We perhaps thought ourselves Christians, and that we were founded on the Rock; and now an affliction comes, and we shake like aspen leaves. Could this be if we were really standing on the Rock? We thought fondly that God was the chosen portion of our souls, and that though all earthly joys were taken from us, we had enough when we had Him; and yet, when He crosses some desire of our hearts, or removes some of His own gifts, we seem as if we had lost our all, and speedily grow sad and disconsolate; and thus we learn the fact that our comfort did not before, as we supposed, flow from the Eternal Fountain, but had been drawn from perishing cisterns; and

therefore, now they are broken, we die of thirst. This is an important discovery to us, and it was to make this discovery to us that God sent the affliction.

“If need be,” pain and suffering will be our lot until we both discern and acknowledge God’s hand in the visitation. We are very backward to do this. We say, indeed, when it comes, “It is the work of God;” but we do not half believe what we say—we have no deep or lively impression of its truth. We hear, also, people perpetually lamenting, uttering passionate expressions of grief, at visitations which, they say, have come upon them unlooked-for, and stunned them by their suddenness. Friends are removed, riches pass away, health rapidly declines, and they say, “Had we taken this step or that, had we adopted this precaution or that, it would not have been so with us.” They “labour to push God out of their concerns,” and they must be brought to feel that “affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground,” but that God is the Author of it, that He owns Himself as such, and would have His children feel that He is chastising them, and that He means to do them good thereby.

And, reader, it is when we come to know and realise this, that we begin to reap the benefit of affliction. So long as we attribute it only to second causes, there will be no submission, no gratitude, no praise. It is when the discovery has been made that God is at the root of our sufferings,—that He is desolating our comforts, robbing us of our joys with His own hand,—when every grief and pang, every sorrow and anxiety, are felt to be His work,—when we cannot banish Him from our thoughts, nor disconnect Him with one of our troubles, nor even wish to do either,—it is then that the soul begins to bethink itself, and the heart to soften, and our proud, rebellious, stubborn spirit to give way. Then the knee bends, and the prayer goes up, and the blessing comes down. Then for the first time we are quieted and subdued. “I was dumb,” said David; “I opened not my mouth, because Thou didst it.” “It is the Lord,” said Eli; and then that tried, afflicted parent could add, “let Him do what seemeth Him good.” And this conviction will carry us yet further. Only let us see that a Father’s hand has mingled our cup of bitterness, and we will soon do more than say, “Shall I not drink

it?" The Comforter will come, even when our heart is almost broken, and inspire the trembling utterance: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord."

"If need be," sickness and trial will be sent again and again, until we learn to sit loose to the world, and have our chief joy in God. How often have we risen from a sick bed and returned to our folly! how often have we had trial, and very soon become as giddy and thoughtless as ever! But if we are God's children, He will not suffer it so to be. He will again mingle the cup for us to drink, again withdraw some blessing, and lead our thoughts heavenward, deepen our repentance, bring us to humility at His footstool. Oh, how thankful should we be that God will not suffer us to injure ourselves!—that He will send pain, sickness, weariness, distress, languor, agony of mind and body, to rouse us from our lethargy and carelessness—to shew us that the life we have been wasting is an earnest thing,—that our souls are precious in His sight,—and that He desires our eternal well-being and salvation!

There are few to whom God has not

spoken by sickness, trial, and affliction; but there are myriads who, when His hand has been lifted from off them, have rushed madly back to the world and the world's pleasures. And oh, surely, sadder far than the sight of any sorrow is it to see persons so infatuated, becoming, after sorrow, more heedless than before!—even as the impassive waters are troubled for a while by the stone that has been cast into their midst, and then become calm and cold as heretofore,—sadder far, for it seems like casting aside God's healing hand, and rising up from under it when He is laying low. Oh, let it be our prayer that, when God has laid us low, there we may have grace to lie, humble, according as God has humbled us,—to lie low at the foot of His cross, trusting that, by the virtue of that cross, He will raise us up again, and cause us to rejoice in Him. It is well to be where God wills; and so, whatever it be,—sorrow bringing sin to remembrance, or agony for past sin, or dread of judgment,—let us seek, not to disregard it or drive it away from us, but to take it calmly home to our bosoms, and treasure it there, jealously watching lest we lose one drop of its wholesome bitterness; not anxious

to escape sorrow, but anxious only not to lose its fruits,—anxious to have it so impressed on our hearts, that, when God raises us up, we may walk softly before Him all our days, and turn our backs for ever on those pleasures which would lead us to forget that we are “strangers and pilgrims” here.

And, finally, (as including many other gracious designs,) “if need be,” affliction and trial will be sent to increase our longings after an absent Saviour, to intensify our desires for heavenly bliss, and to bring us to cherish the feeling of the apostle, “I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better.” Willing to remain so long as God needs our service here, we should yet long to join the “general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven.” Patient and submissive under the hand of God, we may, nevertheless, ardently long for the hour when we shall be freed from the body of sin and death. Now affliction is a school, under the blessing of God, to ripen us for an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. And vain as is the common imagination that those who are tried here are saved from all sorrow hereafter, be they united to Christ or not, it

is yet a true doctrine, that, as there are degrees of glory, so the most severely-afflicted ones, who are also believers in Jesus, will shine the brightest in that glory,—not so much because of their suffering, as of the grace wrought to purification in their souls, by the Spirit of God, through the agency of suffering.

Take courage, then, sons and daughters of tribulation; if united to Jesus by a living faith, you are training, through your very afflictions, for superior glory. The clouds that now darken your horizon will soon disappear before the brightness of the sun, and your spirit of heaviness shall be exchanged for the garments of joy. Be resting on Jesus for all your strength, hope, and deliverance. Ask of Him in every fresh trial, and under every circumstance of the trial, "Lord, what wouldst Thou have me to do?" Beg of Him increasing submission and thankfulness of spirit. Pray that He may be pleased to lighten your affliction; but beg Him not to withhold chastisement "if need be."

Be assured, if you are of Christ's flock, that all shall be well with you. You will enter a land where there is no pain, no suffering; sor-

row and sighing shall cease, and God shall wipe away all tears from all eyes. Yet a little more toil, a little more labour, a little more endurance, and your probation state will finish, and that Saviour, whom you are now delighting to serve, “will come again, and receive you unto Himself, that where He is, there you may be also.”

“ What though our bark a dreary course pursue,
We have the haven of our rest in view ;
How grateful soon the calm which ne'er shall
cease !
How bright the visions of eternal peace ! ”

Almighty and most merciful Father, our only refuge and strength, who, though unseen by our bodily eyes, art continually about our bed and about our path, and seest all our ways,—who art the Author of all the various comforts which we here enjoy, and to whom we look for all future blessing,—I desire humbly to bow down before Thee.

Oh, give me to feel the necessity for trial, distress, and suffering ! Let me not repine under them. Help me to realise Thy mercy in

thus caring for me,—in not suffering me to perish utterly,—in not casting me off for ever from Thy fatherly care, as Thou mightest justly have done. Oh, fill me with a lively sense of Thy goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering!

Pardon, O God, my sinfulness, my hardness of heart, my coldness, my waywardness. Oh, apply by Thy Spirit the blood of sprinkling. Unite me more closely to my dear Saviour. Be pleased, O Lord, to guide, help, and deliver me. I am very weak, and unable to keep myself. I am prone to murmur, repine, and forget my high calling; but I implore the aid of Thy Holy Spirit to uphold, strengthen, and sanctify me. And, O Lord God, if at any time sin prevail against me, bring me back to Jesus, my Advocate with Thee, that through repentance and faith in Him I may be forgiven and restored. Keep me, O God, by Thy mighty power, through faith unto salvation, for the sake of Him who hath loved me, and who knoweth all my infirmities, even Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Life is before you ! from the fated road
 Ye cannot turn ; then take ye up the load.
 Not yours to tread or leave the unknown way ;
 Ye *must* go o'er it, meet ye what ye may.
 What though the brightness wane, the pleasures
 fade,
 The glory dim. Oh, not of these is made
 The awful life that to your trust is given !
 Children of God ! inheritors of heaven !
 Mourn not the perishing of each fair toy ;
 Ye were ordain'd *to do*, and not t' enjoy ;
 Fail not for sorrow, falter not for sin ;
 But onwards, upwards, till the goal you win.
 God guard you ! and God guide you on your
 way,
 Young warrior pilgrims, who set forth to-day !

MRS BUTLER.

Mourn, O rejoicing heart !
 The hours are flying ;
 Each one some treasure takes,
 Each one some blossom breaks,
 And leaves it dying.

The chill dark night draws near,
Thy sun will soon depart,
And leave thee sighing;
Then mourn, rejoicing heart!
The hours are flying.

Rejoice, O grieving heart!
The hours fly past;
With each some sorrow dies,
With each some shadow flies,
Until at last
The red dawn in the east
Bids weary night depart,
And pain is past.
Rejoice, then, grieving heart!
The hours fly past.

MISS PROCTOR.

XI

Heavier Sorrows.

Job ix. 28.

“I am afraid of all my sorrow.”

WHEN trial after trial comes upon us, or when our prayers seem unanswered, and our days and nights of sickness are multiplied, we are prone, not merely to get discouraged, but to be ever conjuring up phantoms of coming evil. We do not *look out* for a bright light. We sit down gloomily amid the darkness, terrified to move,—expecting some fresh sorrow,—dwelling only on some new imaginary grief, which we fancy is impending over us. We will not even admit the entrance of hope—our hearts are shut against it; and instead of drawing nearer and nearer to God, the longer He chastens us, we give ourselves up to sinful despondency, and stand at a distance from Him. We will not perhaps acknowledge to our own hearts, far less to any earthly friend, but our feelings are somewhat of this nature—“Why should *I* hope? I have met with nothing save disappointment,—why should

I expect relief? my burden continues to press upon me with increasing weight,—why should I still entreat an answer to my prayers? they have all been rejected, and remain unheard.” Ah, if we have *ever* cherished such sentiments as these, if they are even now taking possession of us, let us beware! This may be the very reason why God withdraws not His chastening hand,—the very reason why His comforts have not delighted our souls,—the very reason why we are left to suffer, to agonise, to fear, to despair. Let us reflect what God’s purpose is; it is to *draw us to* Him, not to *drive us away from* Him. He would have us *come* to Him in sorrow, and not *leave* Him until we have won our suit. He would have us *cling* to the assurance of His love, even though it bear the semblance of the flame-breath of the furnace. He would have us *believe* that He hears us, even though He delay long to answer, and seem to disregard our petition.

This is *His* design; but if we frustrate it, if we refuse to learn the lesson He desires to teach us, then He will send “heavier sorrows” to effect His purpose. Nothing but our *whole* hearts, our entire confidence, our complete sub-

mission, our willing acquiescence in *all* that He appoints, will satisfy Him. He will not accept half-confidence, half-reliance, half-desires, but He will continue to *deal* with us. He will send messenger after messenger, trial upon trial, and sorrow upon sorrow, until we have been brought low,—brought in penitence to His footstool,—brought, it may be, faint, bleeding, wounded, to say, in the language of heartfelt submission, “Lord, I am Thine, do with me as Thou pleasest; I desire to yield myself entirely to Thee, to do or suffer, according to Thy pleasure.” O blessed result of continued trial! when thus the believer comes to will what God wills,—to choose what God chooses,—to have this much of the mind that was in Christ.

But the ordeal which is passed through before all this is accomplished is painful and trying. We are sure, from the declaration of Holy Scripture, that “whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth,” and that in some way or other, every one who believes in Christ Jesus will be brought to submission, trust, acquiescence in the will of God. But we know not the *various* steps in this process; we know not the path of “tribulation” through which multitudes have gone to

glory,—the months and years they *first* spent in sadness, pain, and suffering, ere they could say, “Thy will be done,”—the hard, stern, and inflexible discipline they had to undergo ere they realised true, hearty submission,—the pangs and sorrows they brought upon themselves ere they were permitted to taste the “joys of His salvation.”

But *knowing* that trial is meant to *draw us to God*,—that fretfulness and murmuring, or a gloomy foreboding of coming ills, tends to frustrate His gracious purpose,—and that the sooner we yield ourselves up to Him, in heart and soul, in will, affection, and desire, the sooner will we be able to “rejoice in Him;”—knowing this, oh, let it be our earnest prayer that *now*, even *now*, we may receive grace to say, “Not as I will, but as Thou wilt,” and yield ourselves meekly, as the redeemed of Christ, to the hand of God, as of a loving Father.

It may be He will accept our submission and quiet waiting upon Him, and release us from the rough discipline of still sharper affliction. Not that we should desire to be freed from it merely because it is painful, but because we have learned God’s lesson, and through the power of the Holy

Spirit been enabled to enter a path in which these “heavier sorrows” are no longer necessary.

Christian, what is thy present frame of mind? Hast thou been brought to submission, or art thou sitting sad and disconsolate, brooding over thy troubles, vexed with dark forebodings, and refusing to be comforted? Oh, it is not wise to act thus! Thou art displeasing thy Father,—thou art wounding thy Saviour,—thou art grieving the Holy Spirit. I know thou wilt not be utterly forsaken. I know that, although thy murmurings and despondency might well provoke God to cast thee off for ever, He will still have mercy upon thee. He will follow thee in thy wanderings away from Him. He will call upon thee to return. But, ah! think what thou art bringing upon thyself by indulging in a fretful, morose, and gloomy temper! Thou art rendering *necessary* another and another stroke of affliction—bringing on thyself more bitter griefs and “heavier sorrows.” Thou art provoking thy Father to hide His face still from thee, and withhold His comforts, and keep thee in the furnace. Thou thinkest that thy present sorrow is as heavy as it can be,—

that the darkness could not be more appalling and dreadful than it is. Ah, foolish one! what is thy sorrow? Perhaps thou art the victim of disease,—thy body is often racked with pain,—thy nights are spent in wakefulness, and thy days in sadness.

But, has God *no* “*heavier* sorrow?” Look at thy comforts! Kind friends to sympathise with thee, and to relieve thy wants,—the prayers of the faithful, which are continually rising up in behalf of “all who are in affliction or trouble of any kind,”—the promises of God, which are “yea and amen in Christ Jesus.” Think, too, of thy *past* blessings,—days, months, and years of health,—prosperity and peace attending thy steps,—the sunshine gladdening thee,—no storm threatening thee. And wilt thou now give way to murmuring and despondency, because thy God has seen meet to send trial? He might strip you of *every* blessing, even as He has removed *one*. He might give you *no* rest from pain. He might visit you with *pinching* want as well as painful sickness. He might with His arrow strike down every loved one whose affection is now so precious to you; and, worse than all, He might “leave you alone.” Believe it,

nothing is gained by struggling, by gloomy forebodings of evil, or by impatience under the trial sent by God. Dost thou wish God to care for thee? dost thou desire to be His child, to place thy soul in His keeping? Then leave to Him *everything*,—to send joy or sorrow, pain or pleasure, prosperity or adversity, health or sickness. Disturb not thyself about *coming* evils. The future, if thou art only willing to submit to God, can but bring thee good; it may appear evil, but “He bringeth good *out* of evil.”

Instead of indulging in gloomy forebodings,—instead of thus tempting God to inflict “heavier sorrows,”—instead of barring with thine own hand the entrance of peace, comfort, submission, hope, by fancying that *now* there is no joy for thee, no happiness in life, no blessing in the future, no termination to pain—nothing but sorrow and grief and trouble,—turn away from all these things, bid them farewell for ever, and take a pilgrimage in thought to Gethsemane and Calvary. Gaze upon Him “who left us an example that we should follow His steps.” He knows all the sorrows that await Him,—the shame, the suffering, the anguish,—but He takes the bitter cup, and, with His heart set on the

salvation of His people—His heart set on *thee*—the blessed Saviour drains it to the very dregs. See Him on Calvary—unpitied by the crowd—deserted by His disciples—forsaken by His Father—the Lamb led to the slaughter,—and all for *thee*! Oh, surely such a contemplation should lead *thee* to cry, “My Saviour-God, let me be dumb like Thee,—let me never open my mouth in complaining,—let me entrust my future to Thee and Thee alone,—let me enter into fellowship with Thee in suffering, and count it all joy that I am permitted to follow Thee in the path of tribulation, in the humble, obedient, cheerful endurance of trial, and the giving up of my will to my Father’s.”

Oh, if thus you bow your soul before the cross, comfort will flow in upon you, tranquillity will take the place of fear, and forebodings of evil will be exchanged for childish submission. A hand will sustain you under every burden, so that, smiling at yesterday’s fears, you shall say, “This is easy, this is light;” every “lion in the way,” as you come upon it, shall be seen chained. And whether your trial be removed or not, it will be sanctified in your growing conformity to the image and mind of Christ, in

your progressive advancement in holiness, in your meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light.

Hear the language of one who underwent a painful discipline for many years, and who had learned to take everything cheerfully from her Father's hand:—"I want," she says, "to have no will of my own; I want to have all my wishes and inclinations lost in the will of God, so that, if I see His will apparent in anything, I may with pleasure do or suffer that thing,—yes, do or suffer it, as if it were the very thing I liked best, because it is the will of God." And again it is recorded of another afflicted believer:—"For thirty-six years the victim of incurable maladies, often undergoing excruciating agony, sometimes for a long period blind, few have experienced the exquisite enjoyments of which her shattered tenement was the habitual abode; as she said to a friend, 'My nights are very pleasant in general. I feel like David, when he said, "I wait for the Lord; my soul doth wait, and in His word do I hope;" and while I am enabled to contemplate the wonders of redeeming grace and love, the hours pass swiftly on, and the morn appears even before I am aware.'

I experience so much of the Saviour's love in supporting me under pain, that I cannot fear its increase. . . . I think that one end to be answered in my long affliction is, encouragement for others to trust in Him.' "

Reader, pray that such a spirit may be imparted to you,—that ever as you move onward in life's journey, you "may cast all your care on Him who careth for you," assured that He will bring you safely home. Strive to follow the example of one who thus writes of himself:—"For a long time I felt myself to be a lost sheep, not knowing on whom to rely; and now, with the deepest consciousness that I have at last attained rest, I exclaim, 'The Lord is my shepherd!' What is there that can harm me? I have reached the harbour, and storms can no more drive my little vessel afloat upon the wide sea. And as I look forward into the future, I can exclaim with David, '*I shall not want!* Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.' "

O Father of mercies, and God of all comfort, who dost not willingly afflict the children of

men, but dost rebuke and chasten those whom Thou lovest, look down upon me Thine unworthy servant, and have mercy upon me, for Christ's sake. Oh, grant me grace to bear with patience whatever Thou art pleased to send! Preserve me from all murmuring, fretfulness, and impatience, and enable me without doubting to accept all things as coming from Thee. Let my soul be supported by faith, hope, and love, under all the sufferings I may yet endure. Teach me to remember that all sickness, pain, and grief, are the fruit of sin. Whatever offences I have committed against Thee, oh, do Thou mercifully forgive me, and make me heartily sorry for them!

Lord, grant that this affliction may be sanctified to my spiritual and eternal good. Bless the means that are used, and make them effectual, if it be Thy good pleasure, for restoring me to health, that I may again praise Thee in the assembly of Thy people.

I acknowledge it to be of Thy bounty alone that I have my being, and I adore Thy mercy and long-suffering for preserving me thus long in the land of the living. My many days and years of health and comfort have been Thy

gift, and my deliverance out of the troubles and dangers wherewith I have at any time been visited, are owing to Thee alone. Grant me, O Lord, I beseech Thee, a due sense of my entire dependence upon Thee. Inspire me with that true and heavenly wisdom which may help me to discern aright the reasons, and enable me to answer the ends, of all Thy dealings with me, that in the dispensation of Thy providence I may submit myself entirely to Thy good pleasure, and glorify God in the day of visitation. Do with me what is good in Thy sight. Let patience have her perfect work. If this sickness be unto death, oh, prepare me for it, that I may depart only to be with Thee! If it be Thy will that I recover, may I rise from a sick-bed strong through Thy grace to walk far more closely with my God than ever I have yet done to the end of my life. I offer up every prayer through the merits and intercession of my gracious Redeemer. Amen.

CHILD-LIKE FAITH.

Help me with child-like faith, O Lord,
Simply to take Thee at Thy word ;
What Thou dost speak, that I would hear ;
What Thou condemnest, I would fear ;
What Thou dost give me, I would take
With thankfulness, for Jesus' sake.

Help me with child-like heart to love
My heavenly Father, God above ;
And with a child-like wonder trace,
In all things Thou hast made, a grace
And loveliness and tender care,
Thy love's true tokens everywhere.

Help me to cling with child-like trust
To Thy strong arm ; and as the gust
Makes the lithe tendrils of the vine
Closer and yet more closely twine,
So let Thy child's poor faith be strengthen'd
By the hard day of trial lengthen'd.

Help me with child-like hope to bound
Far on before the present's round ;

Gazing with simple child-like eyes
 On the bright fields of paradise ;
 And with true-hearted faith to live
 In the blest hope the Scriptures give.

J. E. B.

ISAIAH XXXVIII. 14.

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

I am oppress'd ; I look around
 And see Thy judgment's heavy cloud ;
 Oh, undertake for me !

I am oppress'd ; I weep with those
 Who sorrow 'neath a Christian's woes ;
 Then undertake for me !

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

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

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

I am oppress'd; O Saviour, say
That Thou wilt wipe my tears away,
And undertake for me.

Saviour! though my rebellious will
Has been by Thy blest power renew'd,
Yet in its secret workings still
How much remains to be subdued!

Oft I recall, with grief and shame,
How many years their course had run,
Ere grace my murmuring heart o'ercame,
Ere I could say, "Thy will be done."

I wish'd a flowery path to tread,
And thought 'twould safely lead to heaven;
A lonely room, a suffering bed,
These for my training-place were given.

Long I resisted, mourn'd, complain'd,
Wish'd any other lot my own;
Thy purpose, Lord, unchanged remain'd;
What wisdom plann'd, love carried on.

Year after year I turn'd away ;
But marr'd was every scheme I plann'd ;
Still the same lesson, day by day,
Was placed before me by Thy hand.

At length Thy patient, wondrous love,
Unchanging, tender, pitying, strong,
Avail'd that stony heart to move,
Which had rebell'd, alas ! so long.

Then was I taught by Thee to say,
“ Do with me what to Thee seems best ;
Give, take whate'er Thou wilt away,
Health, comfort, usefulness, or rest ;
“ Be my whole life in suffering spent ;
But let me be in suffering Thine ;
Still, O my Lord, I am content,
Thou now hast made Thy pleasure mine.”

M. E.

XII.

Sunshine.

PSALM iv. 6.

“Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.”

A TIME of sickness is not unfrequently a time of gloom. We seem to be surrounded with thick darkness. As in the natural world, when dense clouds come between us and the light of the sun, we are more timid and fearful,—as in threading our way amid precipices and pitfalls we tremble to find the shades of evening gathering around us; so when in the dangerous pilgrimage of life we find ourselves suddenly enwrapped in mist and gloom, our hearts begin to fail, and our fears are awakened at every onward step. We lose for a while the comforting sense of the Divine favour and presence; we are cast down by the pressure of painful doubts and apprehensions; we know not which way to turn for light, and the language of our troubled souls often is, “Has God forgotten to be gracious?” Why has this darkness come upon me? why am I left so comfortless? why is the

hand withdrawn which used to guide me?—why the comfort withheld which used to gladden me?—why the peace destroyed which used to quiet me?—why do these fears, and doubts, and apprehensions so gather round and beset my soul?

Suffering one, have *you* not experienced this sadness?—have you not agonised under the appalling thought that your God and Father had forsaken you—that the light was for ever withdrawn which was the very joy of your heart? Lying on your sick-bed, have you not passed many a weary, anxious hour trying to discover, “Why is it so with me? why has my health been taken away? why has trouble been sent upon me? wherefore, O my God, art Thou angry with Thy child? and wherefore dost Thou leave me to grope my way through such impenetrable darkness?”

Oh! this is the ordeal of sickness,—this is part of the “much tribulation.” No “strange” thing has happened unto thee. Thy Father has not left thee, neither has He withdrawn the sunshine of His favour. He has only permitted clouds to intervene, dark and mysterious providences to come across the sky, and dangers

to threaten you for a season. And He has had the wisest reasons for so doing. He knew how prone His children ever are to forget or undervalue their most precious blessings,—how the world, and our daily intercourse with it, tend to weaken and destroy our longings for heavenly communion and fellowship,—how the uninterrupted continuance of blessing and comfort and peace is not conducive to the growth and development of the Christian character, but often-times leads to listlessness, inactivity, and spiritual pride.

Therefore does He send trial, distress, suffering; therefore does He remove some valued blessing or comfort; therefore does He command the clouds to gather and to cast their deepening shadows round His loved one. It is not that He delights in giving pain, or in lessening the peace and comfort of His children. Oh, no! It is that they may long more ardently for *that* of which they have been for a season deprived; it is that the darkness may make the sunshine more precious,—that the fears and doubts may intensify the desire for peace and security,—that the absence of spiritual joy may re-awaken the longing for its return,—that the

dangers and perils which ever and anon are exciting the cry for help may lead the trembling one to distrust self, to feel no security in mere human help, but to look upwards to Him “whose arm is not shortened that it cannot save, whose ear is not heavy that it cannot hear.”

“It is in this way that a *forgotten* God recalls our wandering affections to Himself. He lays waste the enthroned creature that He may once again enthrone Himself. He breaks the cistern, not that we may be left parched and fainting in the wilderness of life, but go and satisfy our thirsting souls once again from the everlasting spring. He crushes the reed, but He substitutes for it a rock. He puts far away from us ‘lover and friend,’ with all the unutterable sweetness of their affection and the tenderness of their love; but what does He substitute? Himself, the intense, unfathomable love of His own infinite mind, the presence of Christ, and communion with heaven.”

Precious surely is the time of sickness if it accomplish this gracious design,—if it bring the soul to a nearer, closer, more intimate and endearing fellowship with its God and Father.

Painful it doubtless is to undergo this discipline, yet is it needful. And shall we for a moment compare the brief interval of suffering with the season of restored joy and peace and gladness? What though health may have declined? what though we may have been withdrawn from the world, and have been robbed of some of its enjoyments? To have again the assurance of the Father's love, of the Saviour's intercession, of the Spirit's help and guidance, oh, is not this infinitely more precious? To feel that our spiritual energies have been quickened and renewed,—that our faith, and love, and hope, have been strengthened and increased,—that our thoughts and feelings, our desires and aspirations, have all become more heavenly and pure,—oh, surely it was well for us that we were left for a season amid the darkness, until our cry of distress was heard and answered, “Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.”

Yes, Christian, these seasons of darkness and trembling are all needed, and it is only when we come to realise how much we have gained by them that we see how gracious, kind, and good our heavenly Father has been in permitting

them, and that we feel assured that they are as much the fruit of His tender love as His more obvious blessings. Faint not then, suffering one, if even yet thou hast not realised the full measure of God's love in thy trial. Be sure thou art precious in His sight; and although He suffers thee for a while to tread a dark and dangerous path, yet He is nigh at hand. Still grope on, albeit with a trembling heart; pray on, albeit with faltering tongue. The darkness will yet be dispersed; the gloom will pass away; thy trial hour will come to an end, and thou wilt again rejoice in "the light of thy Father's countenance."

"'A little while,' 'twill soon be past;
Why should we shun the shame and cross?
Oh, let us in His footsteps haste,
Counting for Him all else but loss.
Oh, how will recompense His smile
The sufferings of this 'little while!'"

Not for ever has the hand of love been withdrawn,—not for ever has the voice of mercy been hushed to silence,—not for ever has the fountain of heavenly blessing and joy been sealed up,—not for ever has the sunshine departed, and the

misty shadows gathered round thee. "Wait on the Lord, and be of good courage." He will strengthen thine heart. Yes, He will "lift upon thee the light of His countenance," and whisper words of consolation and endearment. He will take thee by the hand, and guide thee over the slippery places. He will refresh thy soul with heavenly manna and living water. He will reveal to thee more than thou hast ever yet known of the beauties of holiness,—the attractiveness of spiritual communion and intercourse,—the joy of living in sensible fellowship, and in childlike simplicity and trustfulness, with thy God and Redeemer. And at length, when the end of the journey has been reached, when thy soul is meetened for a more glorious land, He will send His messenger of love. "Rise up, my child, my faithful one, and come away: for, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone,"—the clouds are fast receding from the sky,—the shadows depart of thy mortal life, and the bright effulgent day is dawning, that shall never fade. It is past, it is gone,—the dark time of thy conflict and trial,—the dreary season of sickness, and trouble, and disquietude,—the time of the singing of angels is come for thee,

and the voice of the seraphim is heard in that land. Thou hast wrestled with sin till the breaking of the day; thou hast toiled all night, but the morning is nigh. “Arise up then, my child, my faithful one, and come away, let us haste and be gone; for the dawn is bright on the everlasting hills.”

Oh, sweet and blessed hour for the weary and toil-worn! Who shall describe the happiness awaiting the believer in that world where the “sun shall no more go down, neither shall the moon withdraw itself, and where the days of mourning shall be ended?” True, the valley must be passed through, and it is dark; but there is a song of triumph prepared for that hour. We must bid farewell to time and time’s possessions,—farewell to the loved ones who have been our companions in life’s journey,—farewell to home, and friends, and earthly blessings. And such an hour is full of deep and awful solemnity; but, blessed be God, there is a light which can penetrate even the darkness of death’s valley,—there is a voice whose whispered accents will then fall sweetly on the listening ear, and calm every rising apprehension. “I am with thee still.” Thy Saviour is near;

therefore dread not the darkness and gloom which are gathering around thee. My child, the day breaketh, and we must depart ; the shadow of death is deepening on thine eyelids, and the radiance of earthly suns hath passed away from them for ever. But fear not, a better light will cheer thee, even the light of thy Father's countenance,—that sun, whose effulgence eternity itself will never diminish or cloud, is about to rise upon thee. And through thy soul, already trembling on the threshold of a new existence, the glorious splendour of heaven is dawning, ere yet the silver cord that binds thy mortal life is altogether loosed. Soon shalt thou bask in the unclouded radiance of thy Father's countenance, thou shalt see the King in His beauty, and have no more need to offer the prayer, "Lord, lift on me the light of Thy countenance," for never again shall a passing cloud fling its dark shadow between thee and thy God,—never again shalt thou know doubt, or fear, or peril,—no evening will ever come,—no gloomy night enwrap thy spirit; but thou shalt "have fulness of joy, and pleasures at God's right hand for evermore."

O Lord, heavenly Father, I beseech Thee look down in pity and compassion upon me, Thine afflicted servant! I desire to acknowledge my humble sense of my sins, negligences, and errors, and to plead the all-sufficient merits and the precious blood-shedding of Christ my Saviour. Blessed Jesus! Thy followers and people have the assurance of Thine own gracious declaration, that if they come to Thee weary and heavy laden they shall find rest unto their souls. O Saviour of the world! I come to Thee weary and heavy laden with the burden of sin; may I find deliverance in Thee! May I find access to Thy favour by that living way which Thou hast appointed. May my faith fail not in the day of trial! and when clouds and darkness are around my steps, oh, be Thou near to help me, and to lift upon me the light of Thy countenance! Grant, O Lord, that I may be kept from all distrust or murmuring; and may I have grace to resign myself into Thy hands, with entire submission to Thy wise appointments. Thou, Lord, knowest the discipline I need, the furnace of trial through which I must pass, till the love of sin is wholly removed, and my heart purified from all iniquity. Help me by Thy

Holy Spirit to surrender my will to Thine, and to feel assured that Thine eye of love is ever watching me. Oh, calm my spirit, and speak peace to me in my anxieties, and enable me to say under every trying dispensation, however grievous, "Blessed be the name of the Lord!" Give me patience to bear all my sufferings, and quietly to wait Thy time for relief. Thou takest pleasure in them that hope in Thy mercy; oh, increase my faith, sustain my hope in Thee! Forsake me not when my strength faileth. If Thou, Lord, wilt be pleased to support me, nothing will be too heavy for me. Oh, make Thy strength perfect in my weakness! Thou who delightest in mercy, save me for Thy mercy's sake. Thou knowest my exceeding weakness. Oh, hold Thou me up, that my footsteps slip not! Strengthen me with all Thy might, according to Thy glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering, with joyfulness. Gracious God, restore me to health, if it seem good unto Thee, in order to Thy great ends, and my own interest.

And however Thou shalt determine concerning me in this, yet make my repentance perfect, my passage safe, and my faith strong; that

when Thou shalt call my soul from the prison of the body, it may enter into the rest of the sons of God, through Jesus Christ. And to Thy name, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed all glory and praise, world without end. Amen.

JOHN XXI. 15-17.

“Thou knowest,” Lord, the weariness and sorrow

Of the sad heart that comes to Thee for rest,
Cares of to-day and burdens of to-morrow,
Blessings implored, and sins to be confess’d ;
I come before Thee at Thy gracious word,
And lay them at Thy feet, Thou knowest, Lord.

“Thou knowest” all the past, how long and blindly

On the dark mountains the lost wanderer stray’d,
How the Good Shepherd follow’d, and how kindly
He bore it home, upon His shoulders laid,

And heal'd the bleeding wounds, and soothed
the pain,
And brought back life, and hope, and strength
again.

“Thou knowest” all the present, each tempta-
tion,

Each toilsome duty, each foreboding fear;
All to myself assign'd of tribulation,
Or to beloved ones, than self more dear!
All pensive memories as I journey on,
Longings for vanish'd smiles and voices gone.

“Thou knowest” all the future gleams of
gladness,

By stormy clouds too quickly overcast,—
Hopes of sweet fellowship and parting sadness,
And the dark river to be cross'd at last:
Oh, what could confidence and hope afford
To tread that path, but this, “Thou knowest,
Lord!”

“Thou knowest,” not alone as God all-knowing;
As man, our mortal weakness Thou hast
proved

On earth, with purest sympathies o'erflowing—
O Saviour, Thou hast wept, and Thou hast
loved!

And love and sorrow still to Thee may come,
And find a hiding-place, a rest, a home.

Therefore I come, Thy gentle call obeying,
And lay my sins and sorrows at Thy feet,
On everlasting strength my weakness staying,
Clothed in Thy robe of righteousness complete.

Then rising and refresh'd, I leave Thy throne,
And follow on to know as I am known.

2 KINGS XX. 19.

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

Whate'er my God ordains is right!
He never will deceive ;
He leads me by the proper path,
And so to Him I cleave,

And take content
What He hath sent;—
His hand can turn my griefs away,
And patiently I wait His day.

Whate'er my God ordains is right!
He taketh thought for me;
The cup that my Physician gives
No poison'd draught can be,
But medicine due;
For God is true,
And on that changeless truth I build,
And all my heart with hope is fill'd.

Whate'er my God ordains is right!
Though I the cup must drink
That bitter seems to my faint heart,
I will not fear nor shrink:
Tears pass away
With dawn of day;
Sweet comfort yet shall fill my heart,
And pain and sorrow all depart.

Whate'er my God ordains is right!
My Light, my Life, is He,
Who cannot will me aught but good.—
I trust Him utterly;

For well I know,
In joy or woe,
We soon shall see, as sunlight clear,
How faithful was our Guardian here.

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

LYRA GERMANICA.

XIII.

Grace Sufficient.

2 Cor. xii. 9.

“And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”

NOTHING affords such sweet comfort in a time of sickness and trial as the thought of the “*all-sufficiency*” of Christ our Redeemer. Be our case ever so trying, our wants ever so numerous, our enemies ever so strong, our fears ever so appalling, our danger ever so imminent—Jesus is “all-sufficient.” It is only our *weak faith* that makes us to become downcast and sad at heart. What is the assurance of Scripture? “He is able to make all grace abound toward you, that ye always, having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good word and work.” “*All grace!*”—“*all sufficiency!*”—in “*all things*”—and these to “*abound*.” “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitith them that fear him.”

Here there is enough surely to afford comfort—“*grace*,” “*sufficiency*,” “*pity*.”

Christian, what is your sorrow—your trial—your temptation?

Is it, “I have had a lengthened time of sickness and pain,—my strength has failed, and the skill of man has been unavailing. Around me I can see no ray of hope,—no symptom of returning health,—no indication of the removal of my disease,—and my prayers have returned to me unanswered.”

Ah, Christian, it is to be feared there is within thee a spirit of murmuring. Whose hand is laid upon thee? Thy Father’s. Why has He chastened thee? To bring *thy* will fully into conformity with *His* own. Does not He, “to whom all hearts are open, and from whom no secrets are hid,” know best *when* His gracious purpose has been accomplished in thee, His child? Is it not a token for good that thy days have been prolonged? He waits but to see thee bowing submissively before Him—saying from thy inmost soul, “Do with me what seemeth good in Thy sight,”—and He will either remove the cross from off thee, or give thee the blessedness of realising the truth of these words, “My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

But perhaps thou art distressed by doubts and

fears that God is angry with thee,—that in displeasure—not in love—He has laid thee low. Oftentimes thou art compelled to look backward, and the retrospect is gloomy,—a retrospect of ingratitude, forgetfulness, wandering,—of warnings unheeded, providences disregarded, mercies received unthankfully; and the thought arises, “For these transgressions I am chastened of the Lord; they are too aggravated, too numerous, to be *forgiven*.”

“*Forgiven!*” “My grace is sufficient for thee.” “The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.” “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father.”

It is well to look backward—well to recall the past; but not in a gloomy, despairing spirit—not as if by present or future suffering we could *alone* for sin. No, assuredly; but to lead us “to believe on Him who is able to save unto the uttermost,”—to “believe, and be saved.” All our woe and misery could not atone for any one transgression; and it is not by a painful counting up of duties undone, and sins committed, or by a resolving ever so earnestly to be more careful in all these things for the time to come, that we can be saved. Salvation is *alone*

in Christ. To Him we must go—to Him who, by His death, purchased for Himself the heirs of death, that they might become heirs of glory, and who sends sickness and trial to check and restrain us,—to make us bethink ourselves,—to bring us to Him, the only Saviour and Redeemer,—that we may be driven from the world, and from *ourselves*, to Him, and in Him find rest unto our souls.

Christian, look away then from self and sin—so vile and loathsome—to Jesus thy Brother, Saviour, God. He will not cast thee off, guilty as thou art; He will not fail to welcome thee; but He will say unto thee, “Be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee.” And if at any time thou art becoming faint and weary in the pilgrimage of life, oh, turn hopefully—turn without a misgiving to these words, “My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”

But perhaps this is not thy case. You tell us, “I feel and acknowledge the infinity of God’s mercy in Christ. For years have I tasted that the Lord is gracious, and He has borne with me amid countless sins and shortcomings; but I have an evil heart of unbelief, against whose

suggestions I have continually to struggle, and whose temptings I sometimes feel myself unable to resist. No sooner have I gained a victory over some besetting sin, some evil temper, some worldly desire,—than another, equally powerful and seductive, presents itself, and from day to day I am engaged in a conflict, battling with some enemy, resisting some onset, and hardly able to keep my ground."

Reader, yours is precisely the Christian's experience,—just what you were told to expect when you entered the narrow way,—and what you may continue to anticipate until you "enter the rest which remaineth for the people of God." But why be discouraged? He who has sustained you hitherto will be "with you" still. Your strength has often been fast failing, but you have not been overcome; why then should you dread that defeat awaits you? The very struggles you have maintained have added to your strength, and given you fresh vigour; the very fear of being vanquished has been a stimulus to new exertion, and is a sign that you "will finally prevail." Your enemies are strong and mighty,—yes, but not stronger than those whom your blessed Saviour met and trampled under

foot. He will nerve your arm afresh for the struggle. He will help you not only to maintain your ground, but to gain the victory; and if ever you feel within you the risings of fear, or doubt, or despondency, oh, be cheered by these two precious assurances,—“My grace is sufficient for thee;” and again, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne.”

Christian, whatever your trial, distress, or sorrow, have faith in the promise of your Saviour. All else may fail you, but “His word standeth sure.” You will have your struggles and conflicts,—you will have dark and gloomy days and nights of storm and tempest; but fear not—you will be carried safely through them all. You may be wounded and torn, and, covered with many scars,—bearing the marks of many a hard-fought battle,—with the dust of a weary journey on your garments,—with the sword not resting in its scabbard, but grasped as if for another onset,—you may be summoned from the battle-plain; but what then?

Away from conflict, from tumult, and strife,
—away from sin, temptation, and sorrow,—

away, in that blessed home of peace and purity, where no fear shall again disturb, no foe again attack, no evil heart again lead astray,—you will “rest from all your labours.” The trumpet will no more summon to the battle; its last clarion-note will be “Victory!” and amid the glad hosannas of the heavenly hosts you will be welcomed as another conqueror,—a conqueror through Him whose grace was sufficient for thee, and whose strength was made perfect in weakness.

O most gracious Father, who hast invited all who feel their need of Thy grace to come unto Thee, have mercy upon me, for I am in trouble. I am deeply sensible that I am far from exercising that unreserved submission to Thy will which I ought to exercise. Help me, I beseech Thee, so to trust in Thy infinite goodness and unerring wisdom, that I may be able to say from my very heart, “Thy will be done.” Oh, teach me to be grateful for the manifold comforts allotted me, and support me graciously, that my soul be not cast down and disquieted within me. Keep me from all repining thoughts, and do Thou make Thy grace at all times suffi-

cient for me, and perfect Thy strength in my weakness. Let my soul be supported by faith, hope, and patience, under all the sufferings I may yet endure. Bless the means that are used, and make them effectual, if it be Thy good pleasure, for restoring me to health, that I may again praise Thee in the assembly of Thy saints. Make me willing to glorify Thee either by life or by death. Give me a simple dependence upon Thee, and enable me in all things to commit my way unto Thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.—AMEN.

ISAIAH I. 10.

The way seems dark about me, overhead
The clouds have long since met in gloomy spread;
And when I look'd to see the day break through,
Cloud after cloud came up with volume new.

And in that shadow I have pass'd along,
Feeling myself grow weak as it grew strong;
Walking in doubt and searching for the way,
And often at a stand, as now to-day.

Lord, I am not sufficient for these things;—
Give me the light that Thy sweet presence
brings;
Give me Thy grace, give me Thy constant
strength;
Lord, for my comfort now appear at length.

It may be that my way doth seem confused,
Because my heart of Thy way is afraid,—
Because my eyes have constantly refused
To see the only opening Thou hast made.

Because my will would cross some flow'ry plain
Where Thou hast thrown a hedge from side to
side,

And turneth from the stony path of pain,
Its trouble, or its ease, not even tried.

If thus I try to force my way along,
The smoothest road encumber'd is to me;
For were I as an angel swift or strong,
I could not go unless allow'd by Thee.

And now I pray Thee, Lord, to lead Thy child—
Poor, wretched wanderer from Thy grace and
love—

Whatever way Thou pleasest through the wild,
So it but take me to my home above.

PSALM LXV. 2.

O Thou who hearest prayer,
The God of power and might,
To seek Thy face be all our care,
Our whole delight.
O God of grace and love,
Regard us from Thy throne;
Send down to us the heavenly Dove,
Seal us Thine own!

We have no other trust
But Thy dear sacrifice;
Our hope, Thou Holy One and Just,
Do not despise.
Sinful, we plead Thy blood;
Weak, we implore Thy power;
Saviour, remember us for good
In danger's hour!

Come with Thy saving strength,
With healing virtue come;
And let Thy guiding hand at length
Conduct us home;
Till, saved from all annoy
Of earthly fear and strife,
We enter into endless joy,
And heavenly life.

XIV.

If the Lord Will.

1 JOHN v. 14, 15.

".... If we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."

THERE is much to comfort us in these words. When health fails, when prosperity departs, or when our homes become the homes of mourning, we are prone, if we do not watch against the danger, to have our confidence in the power and efficacy of prayer weakened,—nay, sometimes, for a season, destroyed.

Perhaps we have offered up petitions for health, for plenty, for prosperity in the world, and instead of these things we have had sickness, adversity, and ever-increasing cares and troubles, and we have rashly supposed that our petitions were unheard.

Or, more painful still, perhaps we prayed for the assurance of forgiveness,—for a realising sense of God's love in Christ,—for stronger faith,—for some precious spiritual blessing or

comfort, which we imagined would insure our happiness, peace, joy. But we continued still downcast, sad; faith's grasp was feeble; every wave that dashed against us seemed as if destined to hurl us against the rocks, and our cry of distress was lost amid the roar of the angry elements,—“Had not God forgotten to be gracious?” Was it not almost needless to continue praying? Whose case was so urgent, whose danger so imminent, whose need so great as ours? and yet our petitions had met with no response,—our entreaties for help had been unavailing?

Such questions our unbelieving hearts frequently suggest, and they render necessary discipline more severe, trying, and long-continued, until we are brought to honour God by fully and implicitly *trusting* Him.

Three things ought to be ever kept in view with regard to prayer.

First, the range, the extent to which we may go in our petitions at a throne of grace, although vast and soul-satisfying, has yet a *boundary-line*. It is inscribed with these words —“*According to His will.*”

We are at best but children,—wilful, erring

children,—ignorant of what would prove a blessing or a curse to us,—often anxious for those things which would prove hurtful, and slow to believe that a painful cross, a heavy affliction, is really the *best* thing God could send us. Our heavenly Father, who has graciously adopted us in Christ, and means to train us to obedience, self-denial, and submission, whilst, in the fulness of His love, offering the inestimable treasures of His grace, will only bestow upon us what He knows to be truly and lastingly beneficial to our souls. Therefore His promise of blessing is limited to things which are “according to His will.”

But some anxious, trembling one may say, “Surely, to implore the assurance of forgiveness,—to entreat the bestowal of pardon through the blood of Christ,—to ask for stronger faith, deeper love, livelier hope,—to offer such petitions as these,—must be ‘according to His will.’”

Yes, assuredly; oh that we could ever doubt it, after all that God has done to convince us of His willingness to forgive, to pardon freely, and for ever! See page after page of Holy Scripture bright with promises, invitations, entreaties! See the loving Saviour, anxious to

melt hard and stony hearts, weeping over the impenitent, speaking tenderly to the guilty, the polluted, the vile,—giving up His precious life to ransom souls from destruction,—grasping, in His latest hour, a victim from the power of the enemy, to bear it as a trophy of the victory of redeeming love; and who shall dare say there is unwillingness on the part of God to forgive? Hear these words: “Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.” Listen to the Saviour’s description of His mission: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor: he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” And what was His language of bitter lamentation? “Ye will not come unto me that ye may be saved”

Oh, there is no unwillingness on the part of God! but, alas! there is *unbelief* on ours. We will not take God *at His word*,—we will persist in rearing barriers where there should be none, and in cherishing doubts and fears when our hearts might be filled with peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

God has given us His word,—He bids us lay hold on His promises,—He invites us to be reconciled,—He urges us to accept forgiveness,—He condescends to entreat us in accents of winning tenderness, and sets before us His intense anxiety for our salvation in these words: “God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

We ourselves, then, are to blame, if we have not the assurance of forgiveness. We will not trust God. We refuse to credit His word. Of this we may be sure, that in praying for the grace of assurance we are doing right. Let us pray on and wrestle with God until there is within us *that* which we long for. So also in regard to faith, and love, and hope. If we have them not in their vigour, let us not rest satisfied

until they are increased. In asking these things, we are asking what is "*according to His will.*"

In many things we are *not*; and therefore something else is given: sickness, because it is better for us, in present circumstances, than unbroken health, is the answer to our prayer,—adversity, because, perhaps, we are trusting too much to our prosperity, is the gift bestowed. Friends are taken from us, and our hearts are wounded and stricken, because we set them as idols on the altar of our affections, where God must reign supreme. Our petitions were not "*according to His will,*" and He gave us what He saw to be needful.

Again, we must strive to realise the fact that our prayers *have* been really heard.

When once we have carefully examined the *nature* of our requests, and been persuaded that, as far as we know, they are "*according to His will,*" we should simply lay them before the Lord, assured that He not only hears us, but that "*we have the petitions that we desired of Him.*"

Not perhaps the very blessings we asked,—not health, plenty, peace, prosperity, freedom from sorrow, at the *very time*, and in the *very*

way we sought. We must not presume to *dictate* to God. He hears and answers as a sovereign. But because the highest, choicest blessing which a Christian can desire, and for which he ought to pray most ardently, fervently, and perseveringly, is, to love what God loves, to choose what God chooses, to will what God wills,—because this ought ever to be the uppermost petition on his heart,—he may be sure that, if he ask it, he will receive it, and all the other blessings he prayed for, *up to the extent* when their bestowal would hinder the progress of the life of God in the soul. Christian, rest assured your cry has been heard; be not disquieted and cast down because you have not received precisely the blessing you desired. It was not good for you. You thought it would render you happy; but it would have had no such virtue. That only can make you really happy which has the stamp of God's approval on it, and which is "according to His will." Take what He has sent, be it sickness, loss of friends, loss of property; take it, as what your heavenly Father saw to be needful, and pray that He would, by His Holy Spirit, sanctify it to you,—that it may increase your trust in

Him, and render you more submissive to His will.

Lastly, we must ever strive to cherish the conviction that earnest, persevering prayer is not merely a privilege and duty, but that it is, through our Lord Jesus Christ, prevalent with God, and is accomplishing its purpose.

When we fail to see the blessing come down which we earnestly prayed for, or when something very different is given us, we are apt to yield to unbelief; and as, perhaps, trial after trial happens, we say with one of old, "All these things are against me."

Christian, does the child, when gazing on an intricate piece of mechanism, understand how wheel fits into wheel, how the one is dependent on the other, and how the very smallest is necessary to accomplish the final result?

Neither can you understand how the various trials and crosses in thy life are all working together,—combining in conformity with the will of God in carrying on to its accomplishment the sanctification of thy nature,—until at length thou art fitted for a holier, purer dwelling-place with thy Father and thy God.

Remember, "what thou knowest not now

thou shalt know hereafter," and let this satisfy thee. A time will yet come when, if faithful unto death, thou wilt acknowledge with a grateful heart that thy prayers have been fully answered, that everything from God was given in deepest love, and that "with Christ Jesus He freely gave you all things." Despond not, even though sorrow upon sorrow be thy portion, and the heavy billows of affliction seem ceaselessly to roll over thee. Fix the eye of faith on the painless home of light and love, and be cheered by the thought that, following the Saviour close in sorrow here, thou shalt be privileged to follow Him close in bliss hereafter.

Deem it not a "strange thing" that *trial* has happened unto thee. Strange it would have been if thou hadst only joy where thy Saviour had so much sorrow,—if thou hadst a quiet resting-place where He could find no spot whereon to rest His wearied head,—if the world had offered thee a place of calm and sweet repose when it denied a shelter to thy suffering, mournful Lord! No, Christian; not here, not here, canst thou look for repose, or rest, or freedom from trial, but in that blessed home of tranquillity and joy, where the countless ages of

eternity, as they roll on, shall never behold the shedding of one single tear, or catch the echo of one faintest sigh.

Be this your stay, and let it gladden your every onward step—

“Who loves the cross, and Him who on it died,
In every cloud sees Jesus by his side.”

O God, our heavenly Father, grant me grace to submit to Thy holy will. Thou knowest what discipline I need. Thou seest, O Lord, how much of evil there is in my heart,—what unbelief, and fear, and folly,—and Thou knowest what is needful to remove them. I would desire, good Lord, humbly to acquiesce in Thy doings, believing that Thou art chastening me for my profit. I would bear Thy rod, not merely because I cannot resist it, but because I love and trust Thee. I would sweetly acquiesce and rest in Thy will, as well as bow beneath it, and would say, “Good is the word of the Lord.” I would take gratefully the blessings Thou art pleased to send, for I am not worthy of the least of them. And when Thou deniest my petition, and withholdest what I ask, oh,

strengthen me by Thy grace to wait Thy pleasure, and still to trust Thee, assured that the time will come when I shall bless Thee even for unanswered prayers, for trials, and afflictions, and sorrows, which I would fain have had removed, but which, blessed be God, were made the means of drawing me nearer to Thee.

Hear me, O Lord, and grant me Thy blessing,
for my dear Redeemer's sake.—AMEN.

PSALM XXV. 4.

Thy way, not mine, O Lord,
However dark it be;
Lead me by Thine own hand,
Choose out the path for me.

Smooth let it be, or rough,
It will be still the best;
Winding or straight, it matters not,
It leads me to Thy rest.

I dare not choose my lot;
I would not if I might;
Choose Thou for me, my God,
So shall I walk aright.

The kingdom that I seek
Is Thine; so let the way
That leads to it be Thine,
Else surely I shall stray.

Take Thou my cup, and it
With joy or sorrow fill,
As best to Thee may seem;
Choose Thou my good and ill.

Choose Thou for me my friends,
My sickness, or my health;
Choose Thou my cares for me,
My poverty, or wealth.

Not mine, not mine the choice,
In things, or great or small;
Be Thou my Guide, my Strength,
My Wisdom, and my All.

BONAR.

XV.

The Swelling of Jordan.

JER. XII. 5.

"How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?"

No Scripture reader can have failed to notice that the journeyings of the children of Israel are typical of the Christian's pilgrimage, and the promised rest in Canaan of the Christian's eternal home. Their deliverance from Egypt, their march through the desert, their passage over Jordan, their abode in Canaan—are all points of resemblance, tracing out, as it were, the journey from this world of sin and sorrow to "the rest which remaineth for the people of God."

In the words before us one interesting point of history is referred to, which may serve to illustrate an important and solemn stage in the Christian's pilgrimage—viz., *the passage over Jordan*. Let us meditate for a little on this marvellous event; and may God, by His Holy Spirit, enable us to derive comfort from

the thoughts suggested regarding our heavenly home!

The Jordan lay between the Israelites and the promised land. Doubtless, as they stood upon its banks, wistfully gazing across its swelling waves, their hearts were filled with gloom and terror. Three days they rested within sight of the flowing stream; no promise—no assurance of help was vouchsafed. Dark and cold, the river rolled on its course, and ever as the waves rose and heaved and broke at their feet, the question would arise in many a sinking heart, “How shall I do in the swelling of Jordan?” It was only when summoned to cross—only when the hour for their departure had come—that Joshua unfolded to them the wondrous way in which the Lord intended to guide and conduct them over. “It shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand upon an heap.”

As the Jordan lay between the Israelites and Canaan, so *death* lies between the Christian and

his eternal home. *It* is oftentimes an object of terror even to the holiest and the best. We do not love death; we fear the gloomy passage; our faithless hearts shrink at the prospect of breasting the foaming flood. We would fain tarry on the banks of the stream, unable to find an answer to the inquiry, “How shall I do in the swelling of Jordan?” Christian, be of good courage; the answer will come in God’s good time. These fears will then vanish, and, like Israel of old, you will safely and triumphantly cross the rapid, rising flood.

Mark some of the incidents connected with their wondrous passage. *The ark of the covenant was with them*; upborne on the shoulders of the priests, it went before, and led the march of the advancing hosts. So is it with the Christian: Christ, the Ark of the Covenant, is present in the hour of his departure. At *His* bidding the dark waters will divide,—they will rise up on either side, and hold back every onward-flowing billow; until, at length, the once timid, trembling, fearful believer, stands, with a joyful and triumphant heart, upon Immanuel’s blissful shore. Yes, believer; never has a solitary pilgrim crossed the Jordan unattended by the

presence of Jesus. He watches each disciple with intensest interest. He keeps His eye not only on the busy scenes of life, but also on the secret mysteries of death. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." Sweet, comforting thought! Fear not to go down with Him into the dark river; it may prove boisterous for a season,—its waters may be cold and chilling at their approach,—the waves may threaten to drown you; but fear not, He will be with you: "He will hold you by your right hand, saying unto you, Fear not." Whatever weakness you may be called to pass through, He will be "the strength of your heart;" the Almighty Lord will be with you, and strengthen you,—you will see His smile,—you will hear His voice,—you will feel His hand, and His conscious presence will infold you as you pass.

We are further told that *all the people passed clean over*. None were left behind—none were swept away by the swelling of Jordan. Neither shall any o. God's true Israel be lost in death's devouring flood. Whatever fears may have distressed them,—whatever doubts may have gathered round them as they neared the brink

of the stream,—they shall pass over in safety, because their High Priest is with them, and He has promised to conduct them to the heavenly Canaan.

Sick one, dear to Christ! art thou afraid of death?—art thou inquiring with an anxious heart, “How shall I do in the swelling of Jordan?” It is not strange to be thus alarmed; others have experienced the same painful feeling. It is only through *strong* faith in the promises of God, and hope in the infinite merits of our Redeemer, that we *can* look on death, and overcome those terrors which the most perfect of mortals must feel at putting off mortality. You need not blame yourself if you cannot feel *joy* in quitting this world. Human nature cannot be perfected in this life; it is well if you are resigned to the will of God, without murmuring or repining, when He is pleased to call for you. Death is to the best an awful summons, and human nature turns from the gloomy passage. It is also a mournful thought to be separated from those whom we love most dearly,—to leave them amid the sorrows of a sinful world,—to leave them struggling with all the difficulties, the hardships, and the dangers that attend a

Christian in his journey through the wilderness,—and no more to see their faces—no more to hear their voices till they too shall have passed through the river of death.

But surely, Christian, you may be comforted by the thought, that a safe and triumphant passage is insured to the weakest of Christ's followers. "They shall never perish." This is the assurance of "the faithful Promiser." It is not life, and it is not death, which shall separate you from your Saviour-God. Because *He* lives, ye shall live also; *where He is*, there shall ye be also. Fear not the swelling tide! All is in the Lord's hands, and He will divide the foaming billows, and take you dry-shod over, and not a heaving, not an undulation of the cold waters shall chill the warmth, or ruffle the calmness of your breast. Let this be the language of your soul, "Saviour-God, my trust is in Thee. I will cleave to Thee closer and closer. As the water deepens, I will plant my foot of faith firmer and firmer upon the Rock, until I find myself in glory."

Yes, believer, *in glory*,—away from doubts and fears and anxieties,—away from besetting sins,—away from pain and weariness and toil,

—with Him whom your soul loves,—with Him who gave His life's blood to redeem you,—with Him who led you *on* your earthly pilgrimage,—with Him who brought you to the brink of Jordan's stream, and gave you faint glimpses of the heavenly Canaan,—with Him who, when the billows began to heave and swell on either side, and your heart trembled with fear, whispered these words, “Fear not; I am still with thee. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the floods, they shall not overflow. I will not leave thee nor forsake thee.”

And then, to this add a kindred reflection—that on the other side of Jordan you will greet again the loved ones who have already reached the land of rest. You shall find all who sleep in Jesus there. You accompanied them to the margin,—saw them enter the swelling tide,—heard their shout of victory, and then they vanished from your sight, and you saw them no more. But soon, believer, you too shall pass over, and meet them all again. No more partings,—no sad farewells,—no sudden rendings of affection's ties; for there the icy hand of *death* itself is dead. “Now thanks be unto God, who

giveth us the *victory* through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

Heavenly Father, I beseech Thee, grant that when the time of my departure shall come, I may be found prepared. May I be enabled to feel that, though my heart and my flesh fail, yet that Thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. O blessed Jesus! who didst go to prepare a place for Thine own people in Thy Father's house,—Thou who hast strengthened and supported many a dying Christian while amid the swellings of Jordan, support and uphold me. Let not my faith fail; let not my hope waver. Enable me to look forward to the solemn hour of my departure with meek and humble confidence, trusting only in the merits of my gracious Lord and Saviour, and relying so much on His promised grace, that the last hours of my life may be those of peace, and hope, and joy. O gracious God, pardon and accept me for the sake of Jesus Christ.—AMEN.

"My times are in thy hand."—Ps. xxxi. 15.

Our times are in Thy hand;
O God, we wish them there;
Our life, our friends, our souls, we leave
Entirely to Thy care.

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

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

Our times are in Thy hand,
Jesus the Crucified!
The hand our many sins have pierced
Is now our guard and guide.

Our times are in Thy hand;
We'll always trust in Thee,
Till we have left this weary land,
And all Thy glory see.

"O death, where is thy sting?"—1 COR. xv. 55.

Why that sigh, my soul, at parting
 From a world so cold as this?
 Why those silent tear-drops starting,
 Standing at the gates of bliss?
 Soon the struggle shall be ended,
 Jordan's swellings soon be past,
 And these fears—a while suspended—
 Lose themselves in heaven at last.

What is death?—to sleep in Jesus,
 When this weary strife is o'er;
 And to sorrows, sins, diseases,
 Never to awaken more!
 Safe from every care and anguish,
 Leaning on the Saviour's breast—
 "Where the wicked cease from troubling,
 And the weary are at rest!"

PARISH MUSINGS.

"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy."—PS. cxxvi. 5.

Brief life is here our portion,
 Brief sorrow, short-lived care;
 The life that knows no ending—
 The tearless life is *there*.

O happy retribution,
Short toil, eternal rest!
For mortals, and for sinners,
A mansion with the blest!

And now we fight the battle,
And then we wear the crown
Of full and everlasting
And passionless renown.

'Midst power that knows no limit,
And wisdom free from bound,
The beatific vision
Shall glad the saints around.

There God, our King and portion,
In fulness of His grace,
Shall we behold for ever,
And worship face to face!

HYMNAL.

My task is o'er, my work is done,
And spent the weary day;
I've fought the fight—the battle's won,
And I must haste away;
Henceforth there is laid up for me
A crown, through all eternity!

A crown by hands eternal wove,
 Meet for a child of God—
 Gemm'd with the jewels of His love,
 And purchased by His blood :
 Which human hands could ne'er have wrought,
 And human merit ne'er have bought.

Farewell the cross 'neath which so long
 I've watch'd and fought below ;
 And welcome now the harp and song
 That wait me where I go ;
 Yet, oh, that cross must still be dear,
 Though borne through many a sorrow here !

And oft throughout eternity,
 'Mid all that's bright and blest,
 Its victory my joy shall be,
 And I will love it best ;
 For 'twas through Him who died thereon
 My fight was fought—my battle won !

PARISH MUSINGS.

XVI.

Bearing Fruit.

JOHN xv. 8.

“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.”

IN regard to the sphere of Christian duty and usefulness, there is no mistake we more frequently commit, than in supposing, when God is pleased to lay His chastening hand on one of His children, that he “is laid aside,” removed from his “post,” and, for the time, nearly altogether useless and unprofitable.

We can at once believe in the exertion, the energy, and endurance of the *missionary* who goes forth to heathen lands, that, amid suffering, privation, and toil, he may disseminate the truth as it is in Jesus, and advance the cause and kingdom of his Redeemer. We give our hearty admiration to the man who devotes himself to some scheme of benevolence,—who labours on year after year in furthering the object on which his heart is set. We accord our willing tribute of praise to him who seeks to ameliorate the condition of the poor,

—to instruct and reclaim the ignorant and wretched dwellers in our lanes and alleys,—or to gather in the wandering outcasts on our streets to the house of God, where they may hear of pardon and peace through the precious blood of Christ.

These, and such as these, are held, and worthily held, in admiration. Their names are honoured, and become as “household words.” But how many of God’s dear children are bearing heavier burdens, discharging more painful duties, and displaying more vigorous faith, in the retirement of private life, or in the chamber of sickness and trial. God is “glorified” as well in *suffering* as in *doing*,—in the patient *endurance*, as well as in the vigorous *performance* of His will. There is even a stronger testimony given to the power and efficacy of Christ’s religion in the unmurmuring life of some tried and suffering disciple, than in the bold and courageous efforts of him who, against rage and opposition, carries the words of the everlasting gospel from shore to shore,—who dreads not the burning sands of the desert, or the frozen mountains of the north, —but with ever-increasing energy presses on,

that he may plant the *Rose of Sharon in the desert wild*, and rear the standard of the cross amid savage and heathen tribes. The former may tread his path of suffering unnoticed and uncheered by man, whilst the latter may be animated to almost superhuman efforts by the inspiring plaudits of thousands who are watching his progress. But other eyes are fixed upon the solitary pilgrim, whose every step in his heavenward journey is marked with blood,—who, in the loneliness of the midnight hour, when sleep refuses to seal up his eyelids, “communes with his own heart upon his bed, and *is still*.” Angels, we believe, from the heights of glory, and ransomed spirits, sent to minister to the heirs of salvation, circle around that solitary one, and rejoice in being commissioned to bear glad tidings—tidings of peace, and comfort, and hope, and joy—to that troubled and wearied disciple. Yes, it is a blessed privilege to be called to *labour* for Christ; but more blessed is it “not only to believe, but also to *suffer* for His name’s sake.” It is a sweet and a joyful thing to be a sharer with Christ in *anything*. Love delights in *likeness* and *communion*, not only in things attractive and pleasant, but in the hardest

and harshest things, which have not anything in them desirable but only that *likeness*. So that this thought is very sweet to a heart possessed with the Saviour's love. What do sufferings, pains, and sorrows but (by grace) make us more like to Him?—give us a greater share with Him in that which He willingly underwent for us, and afford the opportunity of manifesting, as He did, a humble, obedient, cheerful endurance, and the giving up our will to our heavenly Father's? Every step of sanctified suffering is a step nearer to the crown of glory. It is a lesson learned in that school of obedience, in which, as man, our blessed Lord Himself was perfected; and by every instance of patient endurance, of thankful, rejoicing acquiescence in the severe discipline of our Father's will, we are “bearing” the fruit by which He is glorified.

Suffering child of God! be not disappointed if, with every desire to *do* great things for your Saviour, you seem to be denied the power or the opportunity of doing anything. Remember, “they also serve who only stand and wait;” and how much more do they serve who are called upon to endure and to suffer? In your chamber of sickness, upon the bed of pain, you

may as greatly glorify your Redeemer, as amid the trials of the mission or the tortures of the stake. In health you had duties to perform, in sickness you have them still. Can you *now* say that you firmly trust God's goodness, and believe Him to be a father, whilst trembling under His rod? Can you still cling to the truths of His holy Word, strange and mysterious as they appear to be, content to perish if they be not true? Can you receive comfort in thoughts of death and heaven, of immortality and the resurrection, of the death of Christ and conformity to His sufferings? It is easy to talk of putting trust in God in the time of health and prosperity, and when our hearts are filled with gladness to extol His goodness and bounty; can you do so *now*, when sickness has come, and darkness is gathering around your prospects? Are you struggling against the suggestions of the evil heart of unbelief,—*against* hope are you believing in hope,—resigning yourself to God's will,—praying Him to choose for you,—endeavouring, like a true and faithful servant, to bear with fortitude and resolution the cross laid upon you, in the same spirit as your Divine Master bore the far heavier cross, to which He was nailed in testi-

mony of His infinite love towards you? If so, then happy are you. Our heavenly Father is perfecting His own work. His secret purpose is being accomplished, and with His own wise and gentle hand, He that hath "begun," will bring it to "completion." Shrink not because the path is thorny and solitary, for the way is short, and the end is glorious. He that perfected His own Son through sufferings, has brought many sons to glory by the same rough road, even by the "way that is desert," and in His own good time He will conduct you also to "the rest which remaineth for the people of God."

Fear not the sufferings that may be still in store. He to whom you belong will give you not only patience to endure, but strength to fulfil the peculiar duties to which you may yet be called. He will give grace amid all the trials through which you have to pass, and victory in the contests you may be summoned to enter. Day by day will you receive the impress of the likeness of the ever-blessed Saviour; and in you, while, it may be, you know it not, God shall be "glorified," yea, and "shall glorify you." He will give you "the peace which passeth all understanding,"—the blessed assur-

ance of His own unchanging love, and the hope of dwelling for ever at His own right hand in glory. He will make you useful in the Church. Your trust, and hope, and confidence in God, under the severe stroke of affliction, or the pressure of infirmity, will speak forcibly to those around you. There will be a silent yet powerful eloquence in those very infirmities with which you are struggling, and it may be *your* blessed privilege to sow the seed of goodness, of love to God and Christ, of holiness and happiness, in the hearts of many who, in the great day, shall be to you "a joy and crown of rejoicing."

But, O tried, suffering one! remember that your "sufficiency" for all these things comes from above! The Spirit must sanctify your own affliction. He must fulfil in you the work of faith with power. From Him alone must proceed the grace of patient endurance, of willing acquiescence, of thankful, grateful joy. If you rely on your own efforts,—if you think that "strength of will" can uphold you in severest pain, and keep you from uttering one cry of anguish, and from yielding to fretfulness and repining,—so far you *may* succeed; but you are

not assuredly gaining the *end* which God has in view. The submission, the patience, the humility, the quiet endurance, which your heavenly Father seeks to work in you, are higher far in meaning than many imagine. The “*submission*” is not merely *to pain*; it is a submission to *what the Lord has seen meet to lay upon us*. We must see *Him* above all, in our sufferings, as the Author of them. We cannot advance *one* step until we have been brought to the heartfelt confession, “It is the Lord.” His hand must be acknowledged, His power and providence realised, before we can yield any “fruit” to His praise and glory.

Oh, then, pray that you may fully realise and see that a Father’s hand has mingled your cup of bitterness, and then may you hope to be able from the heart to say, “Shall I not drink it?” Seek also to be resting on Jesus for all your strength, your hope, your comfort, and deliverance. Believe in Him as your all-sufficient Saviour, as your Pattern, and as your Support in every tribulation. Ask of Him in every fresh trial, and under every circumstance of the trial, “Lord, how wouldst Thou have me to act? What wouldst Thou have me to do?”

Implore of Him increasing submission and quietude of spirit. Endeavour, by earnest and persevering prayer, to obtain that increase of faith which sustains the soul above the depression of this low world, and the wearying contemplation of pain, sorrow, fear, sin, and death; and strive more and more to raise your affections to things above, where your loving Saviour dwells, and whence He will ere long return to gather you up with Him to His throne, that you may behold and share His glory. Seek of Him the Holy Spirit, to intercede within you, and to unite your heart to God's heart. He is a Counsellor and Comforter from Christ to His suffering ones. He is a Guide to lead you into all truth, to reveal to you the whole will of your heavenly Father, and to work mightily the power of God in your soul, quickening you from sin to holiness, and raising you up to all heavenly blessings with Christ.

Thus living, a daily suppliant at Mercy's gate, you will obtain grace equal to your day,—grace to honour your Divine Master,—grace to manifest the power of a living faith,—grace to endure as seeing Him who is invisible,—grace to be faithful unto death, and, through the

merits of Christ, to receive the crown of life.

“ Who would be God’s, must trust, not see,
Not murmur, fear, demand :
Must wholly by Him guided be,
Lost in that loving Hand :
Must turn where’er He leads, nor say,
‘ Whither, oh, whither, points the way ? ’ ”

Father of mercies, and God of all comfort, who dost not willingly afflict the children of men, but dost rebuke and chasten those whom Thou lovest, look down upon me, Thine unworthy servant, and have mercy upon me, for Christ’s sake. Enable me, O God, amid all my pains and sufferings, to recognise Thy fatherly hand, and to feel assured that Thou wilt make them means of good, and sources of blessing to my soul. I acknowledge, O God, that I have grievously sinned against Thee, and merit only Thy hot displeasure. But for the sake of Thy dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself a sacrifice for sin, and who now pleads at Thy right hand, do Thou, Lord God, have mercy upon me, and forgive all mine iniquities.

And grant, heavenly Father, if it please Thee, that both my soul may be healed of the dreadful malady of sin, and my body renewed with health, that I may devote the life Thou sparest to Thy service, and to the good of my fellow-creatures.

Whatever Thou art pleased to give or withhold, oh, pour upon me the rich gift of Thy Holy Spirit. Through His indwelling may I be enabled to bring forth fruit to Thy glory. Make me patient, humble, and resigned. Grant that no pain may ever tempt me to murmur, or to doubt Thy fatherly goodness. Assist me, O God, to cherish penitent, believing, and serious thoughts and affections, and such meekness and patience as my Divine Master manifested whilst He was a sufferer on earth. Help me, by Thy Holy Spirit, so to meditate on Thy mercies in Christ Jesus, that, in the midst of all my weariness and pains, Thy comforts may refresh my soul.

Blessed Jesus, be Thou my refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble. Thou, O merciful Lord, hast said that in all our afflictions Thou art afflicted. May I realise Thy sympathy with me. May the remembrance

of Thy sufferings check every murmur, and soothe every pain. Lord, enable me, whether in sickness or in health, to glorify Thy holy name. Do with me what is good in Thy sight. Let patience have her perfect work. If this sickness be unto death, oh, prepare me for it, that I may depart only to be with Thee. Whether in life or in death, may I still live in Thy presence. And to Thy name, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed all glory and praise, world without end.—**AMEN**

THE HARVEST HOME.

From the far-off fields of earthly toil,
A goodly host they come,
And sounds of music are on the air,—
'Tis the song of the "Harvest Home."
The weariness and the weeping,—
The darkness has all pass'd by,
And a glorious Sun has risen,
The Sun of eternity.

We've seen those faces in days of yore,
When the dust was on their brow,
And the scalding tear upon their cheek—
Let us look on the labourers now!
We think of the life-long sorrow,
And the wilderness-days of care;
We try to trace the tear-drops,
But no furrows of grief are there.

There's a mystery of soul-chasten'd joy,
Lit up with sunlight hues;
Like morning flowers, most beautiful
When wet with midnight dews.
There are depths of earnest meaning
In each true and trustful gaze,
Telling of wondrous lessons
Learnt in their pilgrim-days,

And a conscious confidence of bliss,
That shall never again remove,—
All the faith and hope of journeying years
Gather'd up in that look of love.
The long waiting days are over,
They've received their wages now;
For they've gazed upon their Master,
And His name is on their brow.

They 've seen the safely-garner'd sheaves,
And the song has been passing sweet
Which welcomed the last in-coming one,
Laid down at the Saviour's feet.

Ah! well does His heart remember,
As those notes of praise sweep by,
The yearning, plaintive music
Of earth's sadder minstrelsy.

And well does He know each chequer'd tale,
As He looks on the joyous band,—
All the lights and shadows that cross'd their
path

In the distant pilgrim-land !
The heart's unspoken anguish,
The bitter sighs and tears,
The long, long hours of watching,
The changeful hopes and fears.

One had climb'd the rugged mountain-side,
'Twas a bleak and wintry day,
The tempest had scatter'd his precious seed,
And he wept as he turn'd away.
But a stranger-hand had water'd
That seed on a distant shore,
And the labourers now are meeting
Who had never met before.

And one,—he had toil'd amid burning sands,
 When the scorching sun was high ;
 He had grasp'd the plough with a fever'd hand,
 And then laid him down to die :

But another, and yet another,
 Had fill'd that deserted field,
 Nor vainly the seed they scatter'd
 Where a brother's hand had till'd.

Some with eager step went boldly forth,
 Broad-casting over the land,
 Some water'd the scarcely budding blade
 With a tender and gentle hand.

There's one,—her young life was blighted
 By the withering touch of woe ;
 Her days were sad and lonely,
 And she never went forth to sow.

But there rose from her lowly couch of pain
 The fervent, pleading prayer ;
 She looks on many a radiant brow,
 And she reads the answer there !
 Yes ! sowers and reapers are meeting,
 A goodly host they come !
 Will you join the echoing chorus ?—
 'Tis the song of the "Harvest Home!"

C. P.

Q

XVII.

Christian Joy.

JOHN xvi. 22.

“Your joy no man taketh from you.”

THESE precious words were uttered by our blessed Saviour at a most eventful period of His history. It was the night of His betrayal. For the eighth time He had repeated the story of His coming sufferings, with deep and affecting solemnity. He had instituted the memorial of His death and passion ; and, slowly and sadly, He drew up the curtain which was to reveal to the sorrowing disciples the things which were soon to come upon them.

Sorrow and anxiety filled the hearts of all in that lonely upper room. He that had “received the sop” had gone out, and was already communing with the Saviour’s murderers ; for it was at length “their hour and the power of darkness.” But even then, when the tide of anticipated suffering and sorrow was rushing in upon His own soul—when He was hemmed in on every side by the malice of His enemies—

and there was now only the brook Cedron between Him and the awful anguish of Gethsemane—our Lord thought not of Himself, but of those trembling followers whom He was so soon to leave in a dark and desolate world, full of sorrows, perplexities, and cares.

He comforts them by many gracious promises, and bids them be of good cheer. It must needs be that He should now depart. The Holy Ghost, in mysterious silence, awaited the signal of His return in the courts of heaven, and must await. “If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go away, I will send him unto you.”

And whilst predicting their future sufferings, He promises a season of great and permanent joy. “Now, therefore,” He says, “ye have sorrow”—the season of suffering to you is at hand; ye shall have sorrow, deep sorrow, during the short period of your not seeing me; “but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.”

Christian, see in all this the love, the tenderness, the care of Jesus! We might have expected that His own anticipated sorrows would *alone*, at such a time, have occupied His mind

—that the dark vista through which He was to pass would have concentrated His every thought, and served to exclude all efforts to soothe or mitigate the sorrows of others. But no! Fully aware of the tremendous responsibilities of His situation—feeling the weight of the load laid upon Him, the bitterness of the cup given Him to drink—and anticipating, as certain and just at hand, a heavier pressure and a bitterer draught—He still evinced as deep an interest in the anxieties and perplexities, in the fears and sorrows of the disciples, as if He himself had not been a sufferer.

He knew how they were troubled, and what anxious, desponding, despairing thoughts were arising in their minds, and He could not but be “touched with a feeling of their infirmities.” The weight of anguish which overwhelmed *His* soul, no being in the wide universe could bear along with Him. He could not have the alleviation of human sympathy. He must tread the wine-press alone. He must encounter the enemy, bear his assaults, and overcome alone. They could not enter into His sorrows, or aid Him in the coming struggle; but He—the generous, self-denying, magnanimous One—could fully

enter into theirs. There was room in His large heart for their sorrows, as well as His own. He feels their griefs as if they were His own, and kindly comforts those who, 'He knew, were about to desert Him in the hour of His deepest sorrow.

And soon was the gracious promise *made good* in the experience of the disciples. The Saviour did, indeed, come to *see them again*, and their hearts poured themselves out in one gush, "The Lord is risen indeed," as if all was summed up in that. *Then* their only difficulty was that their hearts were only too narrow for the greatness of their *joy*—they "believed not for joy and wonder;" and this "joy no man could take from them."

Much men *might* do—they might cast them into dungeons, and beat them with rods, and make them as the offscouring of all things; but, with all their malice, they could not touch *that* which was the true treasure of their hearts. The Saviour, true, loving, faithful, was ever nigh to them. They now knew and realised that, whether in the dungeon, or the wilderness, or the desert, they could ever find *Him* near, and that in His presence they should have all

things. And here, therefore, “their joy was fulfilled.”

And beyond this, too—in their individual history and experience, as days and years rolled on, and as they entered into closer and more intimate communion with their Lord—revealing to Him their cares and sorrows—drinking in more largely of His grace and spirit—sheltering themselves from the rude blasts of persecution, and the fury of their enemies, in His loving bosom—they entered more and more perfectly into *their joy*—they came to know Him more intimately than they had ever known Him in the days of His flesh. A still closer relation—a more abiding *presence*, a more full participation of His nature, His strength, His guidance, His comfort—was vouchsafed to them, than even when in the ship they could go and awake Him when he slept in the hinder part; or when, if the wiles of Satan had baffled them, they could go and say, “Why could not we cast them out?”

Christian! the same promise is made to you, and may be realised in your experience; for it was given not only to the first apostles, but to all “who should believe on Him through their word.”

"I will see you again," is the assurance of Jesus to every troubled disciple. When the consciousness of guilt and wrong-doing burdens the soul, and causes it to tremble and be afraid, then does the *vision of Jesus* as the sin-offering, the Lamb of God, the burden-bearer, the all-prevailing Intercessor, impart *peace* and *joy*. The Christian is enabled to look at himself, even when he knows his own sinfulness, as accepted with the Father, because he can believe that he is joined by faith to Christ Jesus; —he can take up the language of the apostle, "Who loved me, and gave himself for me." There is the happy, peaceful consciousness that sin is pardoned—that guilt is blotted out—that iniquity is done away; and, filled with a *joy* with which a stranger intermeddleth not, "the believer starts afresh in the journey of life—having, like the fabled pilgrim, dropped his burden at the foot of the cross."

Nor is this all. The sense of pardon and acceptance through the blood and righteousness of Christ—of guilt for ever cancelled—of sin freely forgiven—may well fill the heart with *joy*; but still there remain the seeds of evil, the sources of disquiet, in the best of God's

children. All our doings are defiled with imperfection—the very holiest act we perform has need to be atoned for by the atoning blood of Christ, ere it can find acceptance with God.

And it is only the *vision of Christ* which can remove the burden of self-condemnation and shame which presses on the renewed heart. Oh, how comforting is the thought, that, weak, sinful, erring as we are, “in the Lord our Righteousness we have strength!” Christ has obeyed the law for us—Christ has fulfilled its every tittle of demand, as well as its every tittle of penalty. He has completely obeyed the law for us, and “is made of God unto us wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption.”

Oh, Christian! cling to this blessed truth! Look ever to Jesus as your Righteousness, as well as atonement, and you will find that, in the exercise of a living faith, it will become to you the element of a *joy* such as earth can never give nor take away—a *joy* that is well described as “unspeakable and full of glory.” It will impart to you the *power* of trusting ever to a Saviour’s faithfulness and grace—not in name, not in outward form, but in a true, inward

living with Him ; going to Him with that which you can reveal to none on earth, the mystery of your hidden being ; going to Him in the deep of night, in the early morning ; stealing times in the midst of a busy life to lift the burdened heart up to Him ; seeing Him in all outward things—in the means of grace, and in His living Word ; seeing Him even in crosses, temptations, sicknesses, and sorrows ; seeing His permissive hand, and knowing that He is making them all to work together for your good—that every grief and care is but a necessary instrument in His hand, graving upon you some line which is to reflect hereafter the uncreated glory.

Christian, even this is but a foretaste of those nobler and more exalted *joys*—those far more glorious blessings reserved for them who are “the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” Just like the first dawn of day, which is the sure harbinger and pledge of the full, meridian, noontide splendour ; so this *joy* that fills the heart of the true believer is the very earnest of future glory, when all who have believed indeed in Jesus shall pass into His full *presence*, never again to lose sight of it—to be that which

Peter desired to be, in the burst of his wondering heart, when he said, "It is good for us to be here ; let us make three tabernacles"—when there shall be no more temptation to sin, and no more possibility of falling—when we shall be so near to the "Sun of Righteousness," that no cloud shall ever shadow it again—that we shall see Him, and know that we shall see Him *for ever*.

Sick one, dear to Christ ! is thy heart full of fear and trembling ? Instead of *joy*, art thou filled with grief ? Oh, look to Christ by the eye of faith!—see Him as the portion of *thy* soul—thy loving, faithful, and compassionate Redeemer ; and "let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Draw near to Him in sweet and close communion, and you will soon find that "in His presence is fulness of *joy*"—that He can satisfy every desire, and every want, and every aspiration, and raise, and refine, and purify them even in satisfying them !

Reader, all other *joy* is transitory—only the *joy* of the Christian can remain. All other is but for a season; and even here, when least expected, the golden cup of worldly delight may be dashed in pieces from the lips ; but this is a

treasure which none can take away. All outward comforts may fail—friends, prosperity, health, fame—but this promised blessing, this “joy and peace in believing,” is beyond the reach of men or evil spirits. When flesh and heart fail—when life departs from the material clay—then the *joys* of Christians are only increased. Not even that irresistible hand which tears us from all that is earthly, and consigns us, bereft of every human honour, joy, and consolation, to the cheerless grave—even the hand of Death itself cannot deprive us of the pearl of great price. On the contrary, it robs us only of that which we would not wish to keep, and admits us to the full fruition of those pleasures of which the foretaste is so delightful, that the believer desires “to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.”

And what will constitute the *joy* of believers in glory? Methinks their chief *joy* will be “*seeing Christ*,” and being made more and more “*like to Him*.” I know not what nobler, more illustrious idea can be entertained of the glory and happiness of a saint than that of sinfulness being eradicated both from flesh and spirit, and holiness engrained into his nature, his humanity

pure and unsullied—made like to Him who was “holy, harmless, undefiled, the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of His person.” You may sketch far more gorgeous things, and crowd the vision with imagery more striking and radiant; the summit of man’s nobleness is *resemblance* to his Lord—and of his bliss, unreserved consecration to God. He touches the topmost point of dignity when delivered from all corruption; for then he rises to the state of his original nature—made “in the image of God.” A creature can be glorious only as he is pure,—happy as he is devoted to the service of God.

And thus will it be with the redeemed in heaven. It will not be the robe of light, though it be brighter than the sun; not the palm and the harp that shall inspire them with *joy*, and render them glorious—though the one shall have grown on the trees of Paradise, and the other been strung by seraphic hands. No; it will be “*seeing Christ*” without an intervening cloud, and being conscious that the heart is now and for ever undivided in His service; that every power and faculty of soul and body are employed in His business, and will be so throughout eternity; and that “reflecting, as in a glass, the glory of

the Lord, we shall (in a far higher sense than we can yet comprehend) be changed into the same image from glory to glory."

O Father of mercies and God of all comfort, our only help in time of need, I fly to Thee for succour. Look upon me, O Lord, with the eyes of Thy mercy; give me comfort and sure confidence in Thee; defend me from the danger of the enemy, and keep me in perpetual peace and safety. Grant that the sense of my present weakness may add strength to my faith, and seriousness to my repentance; that if it shall be Thy good pleasure to restore me to my former health, I may lead the residue of my life in Thy fear and to Thy glory; or else give me grace so to take Thy visitation, that, after this painful life ended, I may dwell with Thee in life everlasting.

Be pleased, O Lord, to give me a right discerning of the things belonging to my peace. May I share in the joy which the Saviour promised as the portion of His disciples—the joy which no man can take from me. O let not pain, or distress, or trial of any kind, sink me into despondency, or render me impatient or

fretful! but may I have grace to improve every visitation, so that I may be brought nearer to Thee, and be more conformed to the image of my blessed Redeemer. Give me to feel that there can be no greater comfort than to be made like unto Christ, by suffering patiently adversities, troubles, and sicknesses. Help me ever to bear in mind that my Saviour Himself went not up to joy, but first He suffered pain; that He entered not into His glory before He was crucified. May I be brought to know that even thus our way to eternal joy is to suffer here with Christ, and our door to enter into eternal life is gladly to die with Christ; that we may rise again from death, and dwell with HIm in everlasting life.

O gracious and merciful God, wash and cleanse my soul with the blood of Thy Son, and the graces of Thy Spirit, that it may be delivered from all the defilements which it has contracted in this present evil world, and be found safe and happy in the hour of death, and in the great day of our Lord Jesus Christ. Fit me, O Lord, for living or dying, that it may be unto me Christ to live, and gain to die; and that in all things I may find cause to glorify Thy name.

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If Thou shalt be pleased to release me from my present distress, and to add to me a yet further term of life, oh, that I may live to Thee, to do Thee better service, and bring Thee greater glory! Or if Thou hast determined that this sickness shall be unto death, prepare me, O merciful God, by Thy grace for Thy blessed self; and grant me a safe and peaceful passage out of this mortal life to a heavenly and immortal. Carry me safe through the valley of the shadow of death, and let me find a joyful admission into the everlasting kingdom of my Lord.

Let me be Thine in life and death, and for evermore, through the all-sufficient merits and mediation of Thy dear Son, our most prevailing Advocate and Redeemer, Jesus Christ.—AMEN.

Be *patient*—life is very brief,
It passes quickly by ;
And if it proves a troubled scene,
Beneath a stormy sky,
It is but like the shaded night
That brings a morn of radiance bright.

Be *hopeful*—cheerful faith will bring
 A living joy to thee,
 And make thy life a hymn of praise,
 From doubt and murmur free ;
 Whilst like a sunbeam thou wilt bless,
 And bring to others happiness !

Be *earnest*—an immortal soul
 Should be a worker true ;
 Employ thy talents for thy God,
 And ever keep in view
 The judgment scene—the last great day
 When heaven and earth will pass away.

Be *holy*—let not sin's dark stain
 Thy spirit's whiteness dim—
 Keep close to Jesus 'mid the world,
 And trust alone in Him ;
 So, midst thy business and thy rest,
 Thou wilt be comforted and blest.

Be *prayerful*—ask, and thou wilt have
 Strength equal to thy day ;
 Prayer clasps the hand that guides the world :
 Oh, make it then thy stay !
 Ask largely, and thy God will be
 A kindly giver unto thee !

Be *ready*—many fall around—
 Our loved ones disappear;
 We know not when our call may come,
 Nor should we wait in fear :
If ready, we can calmly rest ;
Living or dying, we are blest !

ANON.

1 CORINTHIANS III. 22.

If God is mine, then present things,
 And things to come, are mine ;
 Yea, Christ, His Word, and Spirit too,
 And glory all divine.

If He is mine, then from His love
 He every trouble sends :
 All things are working for my good,
 And bliss His rod attends.

If He is mine, I need not fear
 The rage of earth and hell ;
 He will support my feeble power,
 Their utmost force repel.

If He is mine, let friends forsake,
Let wealth and honour flee,—
Sure He who giveth me Himself
Is more than these to me.

If He is mine, I'll boldly pass
Through death's tremendous vale;
He is a solid comfort, when
All other comforts fail.

Oh, tell me, Lord, that Thou art mine!
What can I wish beside?
My soul shall at the fountain live,
When all the streams are dried.

LUKE XXII. 42.

One prayer I have—all prayers in one—
When I am wholly Thine:
Thy will, my God, Thy will be done,
And let that will be mine.

All-wise, almighty, and all-good,
In Thee I firmly trust;
Thy ways, unknown or understood,
Are merciful and just.

May I remember that to Thee
Whate'er I have I owe;
And back, in gratitude from me,
May all Thy bounties flow.

Thy gifts are only then enjoy'd
When used as talents lent:
Those talents only well employ'd
When in Thy service spent.

And though Thy wisdom takes away,
Shall I arraign Thy will?
No! let me bless Thy name, and say,
“The Lord is gracious still.”

A pilgrim through the earth I roam,
Of nothing long possess'd;
And all must fail when I go home,
For this is not my rest.

Write but my name upon the roll
Of Thy redeem'd above;
Then, heart and mind, and strength and soul,
I'll love Thee for Thy love.

XVIII
Contentment.

PHIL. iv. 11.

“I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.”

How few among us have made this advancement in knowledge! How ready are we, when anything thwarts our inclinations, disarranges our plans, or affects our interests, to fret and murmur—to sit down in gloomy despondency, and say with the patriarch, “All these things are against me!” The reason is, because we have not, like the apostle, been “learning.” Contentment is not acquired all at once. It is only by a gradual process that this spirit is fostered in us,—only by striving to bear patiently the lesser ills of life—the daily crosses and vexations which come upon us—that we can acquire the power of bearing up, without complaint, under the more trying and oppressive sorrows which, in the providence of God, fall to our share. Nor is it by trusting to our own strength that we can attain this happy frame of mind.

God gives grace to those who improve what they have already received. The oftener He sees His child putting forth the strength already imparted, the more willing is He to renew that strength. It was so with the apostle. How varied had been his experience! and how strenuously did he seek, under every change of circumstance, to improve and manifest the grace of God which had been given him! Think of what he had to undergo whilst “learning” the *lesson of contentment!* In his journeyings and perils,—his imprisonments and shipwrecks,—his weariness and painfulness,—his watchings, hunger, thirst, fastings, cold, and nakedness,—he must have endured many severe and painful privations; but all the while he was “learning,” and all the while realising more fully that the grace of God was sufficient to enable him to undergo the countless trials which had been allotted. By degrees he had been instructed not to murmur at the allotments of Divine Providence,—not to be envious at the prosperity of others,—and not to repine when his comforts were removed.

And this, Christian, was no easy lesson. To be able to use the language of St Paul marks a great advancement in the divine life. It is

often a trying thing to see the wicked prospering,—free from trouble and anxiety,—unvisited by misfortune or calamity; and yet, amid suffering, and sickness, and distress, to cherish a contented spirit—to continue patient and trustful and uncomplaining. Not unfrequently, alas, the language of the heart is similar to that of David, “Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world: they increase in riches. Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.”

Reader, it is the *triumph* of true religion that it can stand such a shock—that it can so fill the heart with peace, so animate it with hope, and so establish its faith and trust in God, that trials, reverses, sicknesses, and sorrows only attract the believer *nearer to the bosom of his God*. And, in truth, it is not strange that they should do so. If I find that my God has comforted me under a small trial, shall I not repair to Him under a heavier one?—if He has spoken to me in accents of intenser love while suffering was pressing upon me than at other times, shall I not instantly flee to Him when my troubles

return?—and if His grace has brought me forth out of one affliction, wiser, better, more earnest, self-denying, humble, and resigned, oh, to whom should I rush with greater eagerness and urgency, when the flood of sorrow is overwhelming me, than to Him who, having “given His own dear Son for me, shall with Him also freely give me all things” needful for my present emergency?

Besides, dear reader, never forget the *necessity* of trial. Assuredly God does not send trouble or sickness or poverty merely to fret and annoy His children—to render them unhappy and discontented. No; but forasmuch as our natures are sinful, and must be sanctified,—forasmuch as we are wilful, and must be brought to obedience,—forasmuch as every remnant of the evil principle must be removed ere we can enter the kingdom of heaven,—God tries His children, not by a steady course of prosperity, nor by a long-continued and uniform adversity, but by transition from the one to the other. He knows that the grace which might be sufficient for the day of sunshine will not bear us up amid darkness and tempest,—that the virtues which appear in the Christian when all is serene and

tranquil, might be crushed and deadened amid reverses and disappointments. And as it is His purpose to strengthen the Christian character—to develop it more and more, until it is fitted for His own immediate presence—He makes the believer's path one of varied experiences,—of joy and sorrow,—of health and sickness,—of prosperity and adversity. But then, new grace is imparted for every new form of trial, and new traits of character come into view in these rapid transitions of life. For as the gold or the diamond, unsubjected to the crucible and to other agencies, might have continued to shine with steady beauty and brilliancy, but not with the peculiar beauty effected by chemical changes; so, in Christian life, many a beautiful trait of character would have remained undiscovered throughout unbroken prosperity or long-continued adversity. There might have been always the *reality* of religion, but not that peculiar manifestation which is produced in the transition from the one to the other. If never tried by sickness and suffering, never would the Christian learn to say with the apostle, “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content;” and he would therefore fail to produce one of the most

precious *fruits* of religion in the soul—*the conviction that God is right in all His ways.*

Consider, too, that many of the external evils are of our own choice. We have brought them on ourselves. They are the fruit of our own doings,—it may be of our pride and selfishness, our worldliness, and waywardness, and folly. Why, then, be impatient and discontented under those evils which we ourselves have chosen? Why murmur and repine because these trees have borne their natural fruit?

Or, it may be, these apparent evils are beyond our control. We have no power to prevent them. Some, indeed, arise out of the very condition of our nature. And can we reasonably expect that the very nature of things should be altered so as to secure our ease and comfort?

Reflect, too, that the worst we have to suffer is far less than we deserve, and the least we enjoy far more than in justice we could expect. Christian, when you remember for how many years you lived in forgetfulness of God, and yet during the whole of that period were nurtured by His parental care!—when you consider for how long a time you continued in carelessness and indifference, and yet even then were sought

and found by the influence of His good Spirit, and brought to the knowledge and love of Christ,—when you reflect how God has watched over you since you have received the Saviour into your heart—how He has preserved you from dangers, secured you in seasons of temptation, supported you in times of trial, cherished you in the days of sickness, comforted you in the hours of despondency,—oh, surely you have reason to be *content* and *thankful* for the least mercy, and to be *patient* and *submissive* under the sorest trial!

Besides, who is it that measures out the changes in your earthly lot? No cross or trial comes to you but from a Father's hand, to whom you owe submission and obedience. He has appointed your present lot, and every ingredient in your cup is mingled by His own hand. In whatever state you now are, it is by His guidance that you have been led into it. And did you not promise to trust Him? Go back to the first Ebenezer you erected, when He helped you,—when by His Holy Spirit you were enabled to say, “My Lord and my God.” See you not the inscription, “Lord, I am Thine, to do with me as Thou pleasest. Lord, keep me,

for I trust in Thee." And now, because He has led you for a while in a thorny path,—because some of your hopes have been blasted,—because everything is not ordered according to your wishes,—are you to give way to murmuring and discontent? Are you wiser than your heavenly Guide? Would He lay upon you an unnecessary burden? It may be a heavy one,—long and painful sickness,—days and nights of weariness and anguish. What then? All was "needed." Thou art pained,—yes; but look not at what thou art suffering, but at what thou hast deserved to suffer. "Why should a living man complain?" Hast thou received no proofs of God's tender mercy? God always, to His own children, sends His *staff* with His *rod*, His *grace* with His *affliction*; and if thou hast not realised that support in the time of greatest extremity, it is not because it is wanting to thee, but because thou art wanting to it, to lay hold upon it and to improve it.

And yet again, Christian, hath not God given the greatest pledge of His love and goodness that the most doubting and craving heart could desire, even His beloved Son, to be our sacrifice? and "how shall He not with Him also freely

give us all things?" His own dear Son was given to the death for us. Can we then for a moment doubt that He will order all things for our real good? And when we think of the Saviour's sufferings for our sakes,—how patiently, how uncomplainingly, He bore His unparalleled sorrows,—oh, surely we ought to strive to imitate His example!—surely we have reason to be contented to be conformed and subject to the condition of the Captain of our salvation! As He was made perfect through suffering, so must we, that if we suffer with Him, we may be glorified with Him. If, then, a murmuring word or repining thought should arise in our minds, let us look by faith upon our dying Saviour, and ask our own hearts, "Was not His cup more painful than mine?" and let the remembrance of His sufferings cause us to "count it all joy" to have an opportunity of honouring God by our *patience* and *contentment* with whatever is meted out for us.

Let us also strive to be *contented* with our earthly condition, when we consider that, if changes and vicissitudes *do* come upon us, if they are as necessary as the most valued of our blessings, God has also furnished daily helps,



that we may bear them patiently and contentedly. He hath given us divine and heavenly consolations in His blessed Word. He hath promised the assurance of His love and goodness, and the light of His countenance, to carry us with comfort and dependence upon Him amid them all. He hath set before us bright examples of patience in various trying conditions of life, where we can trace the design and meaning of the visitation, its blessed results in drawing the believer closer to his God, and its final issue in filling the soul with a perfect and unbroken peace.

And, above all, *contentment* ought to mark the Christian when he looks to the future. He is told that this world is not his home, but his place of trial and preparation for a better state. It is but his pilgrimage state—his passage, and such a passage as must be accompanied with many vicissitudes—a place of warfare—a stormy sea, through which he must pass ere he can reach the haven of rest. His country, his home, his place of rest and happiness, lies beyond death's rising flood, where there shall be no trouble, nor fears, nor dangers, but eternal and unchangeable comfort—fulness of pure and

uninterrupted pleasures, and that for evermore.

What, then, though troubles rise around on every side, child of God, pray for grace to be able to say, “In whatever state I *here* am, may I be content.” You have heaven and everlasting joy in prospect, and these light afflictions are only for a season. Then all shall be well; no more disappointments and sorrows; no more dark and stormy days; but the unclouded vision—the enjoyment of the presence of your God—a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Leave God to deal with you; and though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies; for He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. Submit yourself willingly to the hand of your heavenly Father, to assign you prosperity or to visit with adversity—to bestow health or to send sickness; and then, although sudden passions of impatience and discontent *may* sometimes, like clouds, arise and trouble you for a while, yet this faith in God, and this hope of future blessedness, rooted in the heart, will, like the sun in yonder heavens, scatter and dispel them *all*, and cause the mild

light of *patience* and *contentment* to shine through.

“Trust in the Lord, for ever trust,
And banish all your fears.”

Trust Him for the future, as you have proved His faithfulness in the past. Be assured, in regard to everything that may yet happen to you, all is wisely ordered. You know not, indeed, what the future may bring for you; but be assured that, though the furnace of trial is needed, it cannot sever you from Christ your Saviour; it cannot change your Father’s love; it cannot weary out His care. Believe that, in the unknown and uncertain future, there shall not be one storm without His bidding—one pang without His presence; and stay your mind on the assurance that “all things shall work together for good to them that love God.”

Heavenly Father, God of consolation, who knowest our frame, and how little we can endure, even though we deserve so much, be pleased to remember me in mercy! O do Thou either lighten my sufferings, or increase my spiritual strength; and if Thou dost not see fit entirely

to remove my burden, oh, enable me to bear what Thou art pleased to lay upon me. Preserve me from all murmuring. Give me, O Lord, the grace of contentment; and let no repining thoughts take possession of my soul.

Although Thou hast made me acquainted with grief, and my sickness is become even as my inseparable companion, yet, O blessed Lord, grant that I may not think it long to wait Thy time, when Thou art pleased to wait so long for the return of sinners, and art ever pitiful and of tender mercy ! Oh, make me so sensible of Thy kindness and love, that I may be not only contented, but thankful under Thy hand !

Teach me, O gracious Father, to see love, as well as justice, in all Thy dealings, that I may humble myself under Thy mighty hand, and confess that it is good for me to be afflicted.

Give me grace, O Lord, patiently to wait for Thee, in an assured expectation that I shall one day see cause to number my afflictions among my richest mercies. Teach and help me to glorify Thee in the time of my visitation; to honour Thee by a humble submission to Thy will, a patient abiding of Thy rod, and a faithful reformation of my heart and life; that so

Thou mayest return to me with the visitations
of Thy love, and shew me the joy of Thy sal-
vation, for Thy mercy's sake in Christ Jesus.—
AMEN.

PSALM XXXIX. 9.

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

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

My God ! Thy name is Love—
A Father's hand is Thine ;
With tearful eye I look above,
And cry, "Thy will be mine."

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

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

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

2 PETER I. 19.

Hope of our hearts, O Lord, appear,
Thou glorious star of day ;
Shine forth, and chase the dreary night,
With all our tears, away !

Strangers on earth, we wait for Thee ;
Oh, leave the Father's throne ;
Come with a shout of victory, Lord,
And claim us as Thy own.

Oh, bid the bright archangel now
The trump of God prepare,
To call Thy saints—the quick, the dead—
To meet Thee in the air.

No resting-place we seek on earth ;
No loveliness we see ;
Our eye is on the royal crown
Prepared for us by Thee.

But, dearest Lord, however bright
That crown of joy above,
What is it to the brighter hope
Of dwelling in Thy love ?

What to the joy, the deeper joy,
Unmingled, pure, and free,
Of union with our living Head—
Of fellowship with Thee ?

This joy e'en now on earth is ours ;
But only, Lord, above,
Our hearts, without a pang, shall know
The fulness of Thy love.

There, near Thy heart, upon the throne,
Thy ransom'd Bride shall see
What grace was in the bleeding Lamb,
Who died to make her free !

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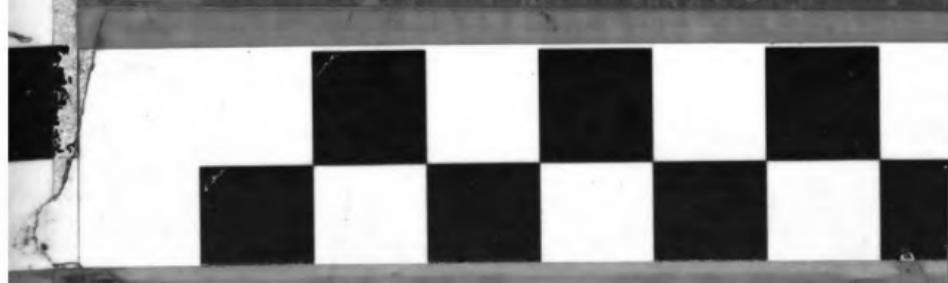


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