

CHRISTUS CONSOLATOR

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OR

A Voice from the House-Top.

A SERMON,

BY GEORGE DUFFIELD,

LANSING, MICH.

FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION AMONG FRIENDS.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

Most of those into whose hands these pages will fall, are personal friends and acquaintances ; and having already seen the "IN MEMORIAM" of Mrs. Augusta W. Duffield, who departed this life November 30, 1880, they will easily read between the lines, and recognize the connection between the "In Memoriam" and the Sermon. The record here given by the writer, of the various phases of his sorrow ; of the mistakes into which he was permitted to fall ; and of his final source and method of consolation, is at least honestly made, and with a good intent. Nothing is more difficult than to give a true account of our emotions, and therefore the imperfections of this sermon are many ; yet he trusts, they are not of such a character as altogether to destroy its usefulness. It may be, that for the present some of our readers "may not see the bright light that is in the clouds ; but when the wind passeth over and cleanseth them," the darkness will disperse. "The luxury of grief" as it is sometimes called—or that disposition to cherish and aggravate our grief—to resent any attempt to comfort, and even to take a pride in self-torture, is a terrible mistake. Herbert Spencer would explain it by "self-pity"—but this phenomenal state of mind that takes pleasure in pain, cannot be summed up in a single formula. It is worthy of more attention than it has yet received, either from philosopher or Christian. Any correspondence on this subject will be thankfully received.

LANSING, Mich., July 10, 1882.

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A SERMON.

Matthew X., 27.—

“What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light; and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the house-tops.”

The peculiar charm of all good writing, is to be natural, without being obvious; so is it with all good speaking; and especially, with the incomparable language of Jesus Christ. Though not a trace of his hand-writing now remains, no more than of the letters which he stooped down and wrote on the ground; yet, better far than with pen, ink, and parchment, the precious words that fell warm from his lips, engraved themselves ineffaceably on the tables of the heart. Well, therefore, in the training of the twelve to be living epistles, might he say to them, as their very first lesson in this respect: “What I tell you in the darkness, speak ye in the light; and what ye hear in the ear, proclaim upon the house-tops.”

There is a principle here involved for the guidance and instruction of his ministers in all time. The spiritual knowledge I impart *to* you, is to be communicated *by* you, as you have opportunity. What I tell you in parables, when, as in that of the sower, you have come to me and received the true interpretation, you are as my faithful messengers to deliver both in letter and spirit to others. Whatever may be the good word I tell you in private, whether it be to heal a wounded conscience, to satisfy an inquiring mind, or to bind up a bleeding heart, that you are to make known in public. My Father having anointed me for this express purpose, to speak a word in season to to him that is weary, if through any words of mine you

are comforted in your tribulation, you are in a similar manner to make it a gospel, or good news to others who are weary and faint in their minds. More than bread to be eaten, it is seed to be sown, for a still more abundant harvest.

“I do not believe,” says Phillips Brooks, “any man ever yet genuinely, humbly, thoroughly gave himself to Christ, without some other finding life through him.” Why not carry this thought still further? Every day we are so doing as to the body, praising this physician and the other remedy, why not extend the analogy in reference to Christ and the soul? If some err on the one extreme, and say too little of their own personal experience, and others, it may be, say too much; the worst error of all is to be silent and say nothing. The strength that faith gains by experience is not to be laid up in a napkin—it should go into the common stock for the common benefit.—I. Cor. xiv., 31. Psa. lxvi., 16.

Standing as the teacher of the hour this morning, the task which I undertake, almost unwillingly, and at no little self-sacrifice, is a delicate one. Probing to the bottom old wounds, healed too soon by first intention, and causing those more recent to bleed afresh, the duty must in its very nature, be a somewhat difficult and painful one. Fain would I be a Son of Consolation, not only to your much afflicted Pastor,⁽¹⁾ but to each of you into whose souls, the iron of a deep and piercing grief has entered, and who as yet may have failed to find an adequate solace or cure. Should I fail in the attempt to give you the oil of joy for mourning, and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness, of this one thing you may be well assured, that the sorest and saddest heart of all, will be that of the speaker himself; out of the fulness of his own heart must he speak, if he ventures on such a topic to speak at all.

We have all of us had enough of the objective in the matter of affliction, and, perhaps, some of us too much;

[1] Rev. David Cooper of Detroit, for whom this sermon was written and preached on the death of his wife, Nov. 12, 1881.

for once let us deal a little with the subjective, and so unite the two in a way that will give a new significance to both. What we have heard from Christ in the darkness of our own bereavement, may He help us to speak in the light. What he has whispered to us in our secret ear, when His were the only words between us and absolute despair, may he give us grace to proclaim on the house-top, as something of which we have proved the truth and know the worth.

Pain, my friends, as we all know, is, in some respects, the deepest thing in nature. Deeper than the body, it penetrates to the inmost soul. Further than to say, that it is a kind of general sacrament or means of grace for the whole world, we cannot explain, we cannot account for it. But of the various forms of suffering, physical or mental, of which pain, more or less intense, is the significant exponent, that of bereavement is perhaps the most severe and poignant of them all.

Some of you have lost a revered father, whose ever-watchful kindness, and protection of your want and weakness have been your favorite symbols by means of which to illustrate the loving kindness of Him, whom we delight to call our Father in Héaven, and, O! the pangs of that bereavement!

Some of you have lost a loving and self-sacrificing mother, and as your unwilling feet could scarcely bear you away from so sad a grave, you were conscious of a grief that is like no other on earth. Some of you may have lost father and mother both, and know the utter desolation of heart that belongs only to those who are orphans and fatherless. Some, ah, yes, how many, like a tree robbed of its branches, have been deprived of a child, a darling son or a beloved daughter, and you have known what it was to mourn with Rachel and refuse to be comforted! 'Each of these losses has its own peculiar pain, but there is one loss more, and that, too, of its own kind, which is even more sad and distressing still.

You have lost a devoted husband, who was bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh, and whose life and yours, so far as interest and happiness were concerned, were but one and the same, and have since then, like a broken-winged bird, been made to inherit the saddest name on earth. O, who can fathom the depth of that sorrow, when it is the sorrow of a widow indeed?

Some of you have been bereaved of an increasingly endeared, and almost idolized wife; one, perhaps, who has walked with you through this wilderness world for more than forty years, who has been to you your earthly manna, whose fond affection has been the constant, fountain of love and happiness and unfailing joy. O what an earthquake shock it was, when like the veil of the temple your heart was rent in twain, and that chill and awful chasm yawned between you and one from whom none but death *could* separate. If there is any pain on earth more poignant than this, when it is realized to the full extent, God pity the heart in which a keener agony is to be found!

Pardon me, that thus I have been obliged to put my finger on the spot that still shrinks from the touch like the wound of a soldier from the pressure even of the surgeon's hand, and thus show you the truc and present condition of your grief. We have had the earthly loss, but it is alike the law of nature and of grace, that in all loss there is a corresponding compensation. Has this gain ever been made good in your case? You have had the mourning in all its bitterness—have drained the terrible cup to its very bottom, but have you ever known as yet the comfort and the blessedness of the all-abounding consolation? Your house and your heart have indeed been left unto you desolate, but has the Man of Sorrows who was made acquainted with grief for you, ever come into that aching emptiness of heart, and made good His promise—that a *present Spirit is a present Christ*,—and so filled with his own real presence the awful blank of your bereavement? And can you de-

voutly praise him, as others have been enabled to do, that your refilled and reconsecrated life has been a gospel to other of your suffering fellow-men, of the full recompense and satisfaction of his perfect friendship? Ah! no, you say, one day this may be true, but not now. Elsewhere his promise may be fulfilled, to be more than father or mother, or sister or brother, or friend, but not *here*. Let none rise up to comfort me. While I live, sackcloth must still be my garment, and my gray hairs go down with sorrow to the grave. Miserable comforters are they all, who have hitherto approached me; it was their own grief that they mourned more than mine. I will hear no more!

So far you have heard me patiently, and I trust, knowing me so well as you do, with some interest, as you have read between the lines (1). Give me your hand in mine, my companion in bereavement, and let us go back to those ever memorable epochs in our life, that stand out as so many wrecks and ruins against the past, when all our pleasant places were laid waste, and the light of our earthly happiness was put out in obscure darkness.

You remember the little cloud of ailment no bigger than a man's hand, that at length overspread and overshadowed your whole heavens? You remember the fatal moment, at and after which the sword of death, like that of Damocles, began to hang over your beloved one, as by a single hair! You remember how desperately you closed your eyes against the future, and the bitter resignation with which you said: "Sufficient unto the day, is the evil thereof." You remember, perhaps, the quiet provisions that were made from time to time, by your beloved one, in view of a contingency, of which they would rather not speak to *you*! You remember the skill of the physician that was no skill; the remedies that were no real remedies; the hopes that came only to be disappointed; the

(1) (This sermon was afterwards repeated in some of my old parishes where Mrs. Duffield was best known and loved.)



supplications that rose no higher than your head, only to vanish into thin air. You remember the steady, stealthy, and utterly relentless progress of disease, until disease meant death, and death meant no sentimental figure on a grave-stone—but a burglar breaking into your dwelling; a robber of all that was most precious to you; a murderer of all that was best and dearest to you in life. You remember that long day of unremitting agony, that longer night of utter and irresistible despair, when all the instincts of your nature were roused to the utmost; when you hated death as the worst of enemies, and stood your ground against him as best you could, with planted foot and uplifted hand, but all in vain, until you yourself, at length, seemed to fail for breath, and to die with the dying!

O will you, *can* you forget, when the ever-deepening shadow sank into total darkness, and when that which you had so long feared, at last came upon you? how strangely *unprepared* you found yourself for such a mortal blow—your faith not even a grain of mustard seed, in size! Your knowledge how imperfect! Your fortitude wholly unworthy of the name! Like that heart-stricken wife who knelt so recently beside her dead in the awful solitude of the Great Rotunda, what for the moment was all that was left to you on earth, but emptiness and vanity! The heat and light had vanished with the flame, and there was nothing left but *ashes*, that the wind might blow away as it would.

True, in the stillness of that fearful hour, when you “kept silence before the Lord,” and were first made to hear the voice of the Lord, walking among the trees of your blighted paradise, and to realize as you looked up at the flaming sword as never before, that God *was* God, you could not say otherwise than this, “*Himself* hath done it?” You knew that *your* turn had come on the ever-turning wheel, and that as clay in the hands of the potter, He had a *right* to do as he chose with his own. You did not dare to *murmur*, knowing that they who did so in the



wilderness "learned doctrine," and were again and again, amid briars and thorns, taught the same lesson—(with "the leaf turned back,") until they murmured no more. Much less did you dare to rebel, and Prometheus-like, set the Almighty Thunderer at defiance. You could even by an almost incredible stretch of faith bring yourself to believe, whatever the odious second cause, that He had done it for your good *ultimately*, in another world! But to say, as if you really felt and meant it, "It *is* good for me to be thus afflicted, here and now," (whatever may have been the exceptional experience of a few) was utterly beyond your power. Tribulation, (the threshing of the heavy flail) had not as yet wrought endurance. (1.) Not yet had you learned the slowest and hardest of all lessons—

"To suffer and be strong."

O! what a new and untried world it was—that valley of the shadow of death into which you were now plunged—where you knew not the sound of your own voice; where the mouth and lips were parched as with a raging fever, and the brain was dry and burning, and where for a time, until you sought it according to its inestimable worth, the Lord withheld from you "the blessedness of tears." "God will not be angry with you if you fail to see just in that bewildered paroxysm of grief, why it is well for you to be so stricken."

Still, you were not altogether destitute of consolation. You remember the strange source of comfort it was to have the dear remains yet in your own possession—still under the same roof, and within the same walls, and surrounded by the same household treasures, as aforetime! how that unwelcome coffin, disguise it by what name they would, held a living presence, and the flowers exhaled a perfume that spoke of earth rather than heaven!

(1) Alford *apud loc.*

But even of this consolation you were at length to be deprived. All too quickly (delay it as you would) did you hear at your door the feet of them that were to carry forth your precious dead to their long and unreturning home; and though they came as your best and dearest friends, and brought with them as sweet and gentle voices as ever rendered words of sacred song, yea, though they even brought the minister of Christ himself, in the bitterness of your soul your keen and tearless eye saw through it all: *it meant death!*—it meant the hour of final separation!—it meant one more sacrifice to that insatiable monster, the all-devouring grave!

Shall I here cease to tax your sensibilities, and draw the veil over any further form of grief, and proceed at once to show how even into such wounds as these, so sore and deep, Christ as the Good Samaritan pours the oil and wine, and binds up the broken in heart? Ah! that would be to leave the sorrowful story quite incomplete, and award to him but very little of the skill and tenderness he so richly deserves.

Greater, far greater, than the mere *instinctive* grief of bereavement, is the acuteness of the pain, when you come to *realize* it, and give what it must and will have, its full and legitimate expression. You open your bible and bless God there is such a chapter as Job xxiii, through which the natural language of a broken heart can flow out in words it is no sin to use as your own.

“Even to-day is my complaint bitter. My stroke is heavier than my groaning. O that I knew where I might *find* him. I would know *the words* that he would *answer* me” (and have it *explained*), “and understand what he would say unto me,”—have it explained fully.

“Behold I go *forward*, but he is not there; and *backward*, but I cannot perceive Him; on the *left* hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him! He hideth himself on the *right* hand, that I cannot see him!”

Look at my bereavement, at any angle, and in any light, and for any length of time, I may, in all its aggravating relations of time, place, and circumstance, I can understand nothing but *the loss itself*.

Again you say, this is my comfort in affliction, and your bible opens to the words of the dying patriarch: "And as for me" (poor *me*, indeed!) "when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me" (i. e., really for my sake,) "in the land of Canaan, in the way," (ah! I remember it well,) "when yet there was but a little way to Ephrath" (O how we longed to *get* there!). "And *I buried her there*, in the way of Ephrath: the same is Bethlehem." Bethlehem, to others; but always Ephrath to me!

O, the death of that beloved wife! It was the great epoch in his life, the culminating fact, "the sorrow's crown of sorrow," in all his trying pilgrimage, the loss of Joseph not excepted. Those who have loved as Jacob loved, and been devoted as lover and husband, as he was devoted, can easily appreciate how such a loss as that of his beloved Rachel, would be an ever-present thought with him, until the day that he too should be gathered to his fathers. As good Matthew Henry says: "Strong affections in the enjoyment, make long afflictions in the loss."

That scripture you can understand, and it *does you good*, to find such natural words of every-day life as these recorded on the sacred page. It shows that they fit into all the folds of the human heart, and that He who knew the heart, wrote the book for it; for, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him."

But, O! the miserable inanities of those who quote Scripture at hap-hazard; who feel that they must *say something*; who know not *what* to say, and yet have not sense enough to be silent! One look of a tearful eye, one touch of a loving hand, from which virtue goes forth as from the hem of the Master's garment, are worth them all. O, these inanities, I say!

“ One writes, ‘ that other friends remain,
That ‘ loss is common to the race ;’
And common is the common place
And vacant chaff well meant for grain.

“ That loss is common, would not make
My own less bitter ; rather more,
Too common ! Never morning wore
To evening, but *some heart did break.*”

—TENNYSON.

So with other short and convenient formulas of comfort, neither applied at the right time, nor by the right person, nor in the right spirit.

“ Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth,” says one—forgetting that no chastisement *for the present* is joyous, but grievous ; and I stand much in doubt of those afflictive experiences that are otherwise.

“ It is good to be afflicted,” says another. Did *they* ever lose the dearest of all objects of earth by affliction, and at the very moment that the deadliest pain was rankling in their heart, like the very sting and poison of death itself, feel able to say, such *pain* is good ? Afterwards, such pain (like that of the surgeon’s knife) may be followed by the peaceable fruits of righteousness, but the remedy must be allowed its own time, for the sufferer to be exercised thereby.

Still a third will say (and especially to a minister of Christ) : “ Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes, with a stroke ; but neither shall thy tears run down, nor shalt thou make mourning for the dead.” But this special and exceptional command to Ezekiel was never intended as an example for others, save in similar cases of impending national calamity. More than one minister have I known who endeavored to obey this precept literally, and who, as the result of such an injudicious attempt, found himself the inmate of an insane asylum.

Ah, my afflicted friends, words fail to describe your distress, when “ the arrows of the Almighty were within

you ;” when your heart was melted within you, like wax before the flame ; when your grief was heavier than the newly moistened sands of the sea ; when you were “ terrified with visions, and scared with dreams ” of horror, such as they only know who have been made to realize them by a terrible experience, than which, perhaps, there are *no* emotions that are more distressing.

Miserable comforters are they all, who would lead us to look at our griefs otherwise than in the light of Christ’s own presence ! And yet how often do we come to this light as our very last resource—only when we are whipped into it, and have tried all else in vain ! When *the Jews* have failed to comfort us concerning our friend, then, like Mary, we rise up quickly and go to Jesus for this purpose ; *but we try the Jews first !*

A friend puts into our hand, at such a time, the world-renowned “ In Memoriam ” of Tennyson. It *is* beautiful ; it is as exciting as wine ; it is fascinating in the extreme, as we have never so seen or felt it before. But after all, when the effervescence has subsided, there is very little substance left. There is no more sunshine in it, than in Gray’s elegy ; it shows only the dark side of our mortality. It does not show us the “ Light Beyond,” much less, what it is to be “ In the Light ” here ! It finds us in sorrow, and it leaves us there, with sensibilities more exquisitely tender than before.

“ An infant crying in the night,
An infant crying for the light,
And with no language but a cry.”

What comfort is there in that ?

Again, assured that *Nature* “ never did betray the heart that loved her,” you leave the stifling atmosphere of the chamber of sickness and death, for the world in the open air. That in the mountains you may feel your faith, you climb the highest peak, yet, save for the quiet that has come to your excited nerves by exercise, you return to the plain more empty and sick at heart than when you began to ascend.

So, perhaps, with similar expectations of relief from Nature, remembering the soothing influence of the babbling brook in childhood, you go to Niagara. You walk beside its tumultuous rapids, until there is a strange wild sympathy between them and you. You stand midway upon the bridge, and talk to the startled waters, as one who knows all about it, from your own recent experience. Yes! you may writhe, and rage, and roar, and lash yourself into waves, but 'tis all in vain! The pressure is behind you—the current is dragging you onward. You *must* take the leap over that terrific gulf, and there is no possibility of escape. “I know it,” you say, “*for I have been there myself.*”

Then you hurry on to the farthest projecting point and look down over the “Horseshoe.” Yes! there you are, as I predicted. Never again can you be on as high a plane of happiness as you have been. The past is past, and all that is now left, is from the falls to the whirlpool. Your heedless foot slips on the gathering ice. One step more and you would have taken the fatal plunge yourself. “Well, what matters it?” whispers the voice of the Tempter, and not one moment too soon you discover *who* the Tempter is. That is not the way to Heaven, you say—the way to meet the loved and the lost. Turning with a shudder, you fly from his dangerous presence. A little *more* sympathy with *Nature*, and it would have been your ruin.

Saddest and sorest experience of all in the broken reeds on which you lean, *instead of Christ!* Disappointed in the sympathy of nature, you turn with no little confidence to the sympathy of your fellow men. You have many friends, and you rejoice in it, and never did you value them as now. You can take your choice, in dividing with them the burden of your grief. With some few exceptions, in those who seem to think that the best way to solace your sorrow is by long rehearsal of their own, you have no reason to complain that they do not feel *with* you and *for* you; but how great is your surprise—how bitter

is your disappointment—to find that sympathy has its well defined limits of value; that beyond a certain point, soon reached, it *hurts* instead of *heals*; it weakens rather than strengthens us; it seems to increase and aggravate our grief, rather than diminish it. The unwelcome truth begins to force itself upon you, that as you must die alone, so you must suffer alone; that this is *your* infirmity, and you alone must bear it; that if ever you are to stand and walk, it must be on your own feet, and not those of another.

As yet, however, there are not motives enough, and you are not prepared for the last and desperate struggle; and so you *drift*—(O, what a terrible thing it is to drift!)—drift into one form of temptation, then into another, and still another, until at length you find yourself on the outer verge of the whirlpool, the *agonisticon*, as Jeremy Taylor calls it, in good earnest.

You had supposed, in your inexperience, that this much dreaded whirlpool of which you had such a definite and instinctive horror, would have been found at *other* points of your calamitous history; with the ceasing of hope; in the hour of death; on the day of burial, at the closing grave; on the sad return to that desolate home that was home no longer. But you find that the *agonisticon*—the critical moment that requires and exhausts your utmost strength—is more trying than all these previous experiences put together, for in some sort it combines them all.

Wait for *time* to comfort, and long ere that, health will have failed, and reason fallen from her throne.

“ For, ah ! what ills must that poor heart endure,
Who hopes from time, and time alone, a cure ! ”

The subtle suggestions of Spiritualism, and Swedenborgianism, and Gates Ajar, in whatever form, you can easily understand as the deceptions of a double consciousness, in a morbid brain, in those who know as little of true *mental* philosophy as of *physical*, and you will none of

them for comfort.⁴ Your thoughts, revolving and still revolving in the whirlpool, and all the while nearing the vortex, somehow (I will not stop for the *rationale*) the one question that is at last *the outcome* of this tremendous mental turmoil and suffering, the one question that involves every other, is simply this: "*What are we to do with crushed and broken affections?*" Shall we continue to cherish them, thought for thought, feeling for feeling, precisely as we have done heretofore? Shall we let them run on, as the blood would run after the severing of a vein? Shall we draw no line of distinction, and make no difference between the living and the dead friend? It is very easy, it is very natural, to cling to the shadow when the substance is gone; but is it right so to do; is it the wisest course and the best?

We gather the various books of consolation from our own library, or the libraries of others. But on this particular point they are ominously silent, or deal too largely in prudent generalities. They give us no real satisfaction. Disappointed in books, we turn to our principal friends—to the ministers of Christ, or to those who are the most profoundly versed in mental and moral philosophy—to see whether they cannot help us; but their answers to our question are equally evasive and ambiguous. One says: "I do not understand the question." Another replies: "I think I perceive what you mean, but the question is new, and I will think of it." A third: "You are over-taxing your heart and brain, and requiring an amount of self-abnegation that a merciful God does not expect at your hands." Yet a fourth: "Every one must settle this question for himself. I have settled it for myself, in my way, and you must settle it in yours." And so we are tossed and dashed about in the whirlpool still longer, and are obliged to solve the difficult problem for ourselves.

Like the afflicted man of Uz, we desire that "our grief should be thoroughly weighed, and our calamity lifted up

(4) *Vide* article on "Apparitions" in *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

in the balances together." Possibly our thoughts take some such course as the following: What we *have had* of these affections, in actual possession, we still have, in remembrance. To this extent, at least, they are ours, and God himself cannot take them away, unless he takes away our memory or reason. But have we the divine permission, have we the approval, even of those whom we so much miss and mourn, to indulge these mixed or earthly affections toward one who is no longer on earth?

Here our duties grow out of our relations, and with each separate relation there is a corresponding affection to render these duties easy and delightful. This is a first principle of ethics, that is obvious at once on the very face of the statement. It cannot possibly be altered for the better. But whatever death is, whatever else it does, it certainly makes an end of mere earthly relations. According to Paul's reasoning (Rom. vi. 2), the husband is a husband no more, the wife is a wife no more, the law of relationship holds no longer. If, then, so great a change in relations is made by death, and another change equally great is made in duties, by terminating them, is there not a third change, equally radical and necessary, in our affections? Must they not be conformed to that higher and purer world, where the distinction of sex is no longer known, where they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like unto the angels of God? To suppose otherwise is to suggest delicate and embarrassing questions that had better be left unasked, and for which there is no real occasion.

There is one question, however, that cannot be so easily ignored. Here is a class of affections which, for want of a better name, we call "broken affections." They have an actual, present existence. What are we to do with *them*? So far as we can perceive, there are three things, and only three, possible to our choice.

We can cherish them, just as before. O, how easily, and in a thousand different ways, will likenesses, letters,

clothing, rings, etc., enable us to do it! But will not such affections, cherished beyond the point for which God had already determined their natural and normal existence, thenceforth have a morbid existence, and, to the full extent to which they are unlawfully cherished, be sure to terminate in morbid results? To a rule so general we dare not make ourselves the only exceptions. The countless lives thus annually lost to the church and the world, by a grief that knows no mitigation or relief, is now and ever has been for a lamentation indeed. The spirit of the true Christian soldier is far otherwise. We are to count nothing done, while anything remains to be done; forgetting the things that are behind, we are to press forward.

But if we do not cherish these affections just as before, shall we tear them apart, and, so to speak, repress and stamp them out altogether? It may be asceticism, it may be stoicism, so to do; but He who will not break the bruised reed, who made the water wine, and restored the dead son to his widowed mother, has no sympathy with either extreme.

One thing remains, and that only. *We can bring these broken affections to Christ, and tell him, this is our grief, this is our sorrow, that they are just what they are. They ought to be given to Him.*

Ought to be? Yes, we must admit it, as a matter of course, that every thought ought to be brought into subjection to him; but, O how long, how determinedly, we cling to them as solely and peculiarly our own. We are not ready to part with them, even to Christ himself. They are everything to us. They made life what it was to us. We would rather part with all else beside. And what can they be worth to Him? Days and weeks, perhaps months, roll on. OUGHT to be His! thunders conscience at last. Then why not let them be His, without delay?

The moment is a trying one. When the conflict has come to the point that it is either victory or death, it is the true "agonisticon" indeed—the original struggle in the

act of conversion itself, perhaps not more severe or more prolonged. But there is no alternative. The old words come with a new meaning, and enforced by a new application :

" Here, Lord, I yield, I yield,
I can hold out no more ;
I sink, by dying love compelled,
And own Thee conqueror."

Even in this secluded chamber of the heart, where no other footsteps have entered, thou art welcome to rule and reign supreme. 'Tis only a broken heart I can give thee at best, but IT IS THINE !

Was ever sweeter or more immediate answer heard than this ? " A broken spirit and a contrite heart I will not despise." Even here and now, in the utmost extremity of human distress, the exquisitely consolatory words of Christ, warm from his own mouth, come home to our heart as truth in very deed : " He that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father also. He that loveth me, the same is my father and mother, and sister and brother." " My beloved is mine." He gives himself to us. " And I am His." We give ourselves to him ; and in this renewed and deeper consecration we realize, to our unspeakable delight, that when he takes away a less mercy, it is always to make room for a greater ; when he puts far away from us lover and friend, it is to SUBSTITUTE HIMSELF.

" He does but take the lamp away,
To bless us with eternal day."

That hour of calm sunrise, when such a blessed experience first dawned upon your soul, my dear fellow-sufferer, you will never forget. So bright a day in your calendar you will bracket with the day in which you were born again.

" O Christ, it was a time divine,
An epoch of calm grace,
A pressing of our hearts to thine,
In mystical embrace."

—FABER.

It was no mere mental hallucination, no mere physical reaction of the nervous sensibilities, but with the utter-

ance of that still small voice, "A broken spirit I will not despise," you were made on the very instant to realize the blessedness of tears, as you could never have deemed it possible. How they relieved that burdened heart, and cooled that heated brain, and quieted that perturbed spirit. It is no longer the inexorable rapids hurrying you forward. It is no longer deep calling unto deep, until all its waves and billows have gone over you, and sunk you out of sight, until the weeds are wrapped about your head. It is no longer the raging whirlpool dashing you with all the greater violence at each successive revolution. The whirlpool is past. Your "agonisticon" is ended.

That night, for the first time in months, that seem ages, like Bunyan's pilgrim, you were laid in a large, upper chamber, facing the sun-rising, and the name of the chamber was Peace."

O sweet is the slumber wherewith the King
Hath caused the weary to rest,
For sleeping you hear the Angels sing,
And lean on the Master's breast.

When the morning dawns you fear that the vision will vanish—that like the dream of the traveler dying with thirst, 'tis all a mirage, the picture of a distempered imagination—but "when you awake you are still with Christ," and his radiance is pouring on your soul brighter than ever. You have not only his real but his manifested presence.

From that time forward you began to take higher views of him than those with which you had been hitherto content. You approached and appropriated him as the friend, the lover, the bridegroom of the soul, and your whole heart went out toward him as pent-up waters rush toward a newly opened channel, and the *aching void is filled*.

The Sabbath comes—it is the Lord's day—a day of rest indeed to your soul. When you take your place at His table it is with the words of the Psalmist on your lips, "I will drink of the brook in the way, and He shall lift up

my head." It is the table of the Lord, and when He gives you a "place by me"—all other sorrows fade from remembrance before that of the Man of Sorrows, all other pain is forgotten as compared with His pain in Gethsemane—all other loves, even the deepest and purest, are held in abeyance, in the presence of His infinite love. The seat beside you is indeed vacant, but as faith glances upward, you see another table spread, and another seat filled in the many mansioned house of our Father in heaven.

Henceforth your visits to the sepulchre are not the pilgrimages of woe they once were. Then you looked down into the grave—now you look up, and there is light where all before was darkness. Then it was the body that attracted and still retained your too idolatrous regard; now it is the glorified spirit that engages your attention, almost to the exclusion of all else beside. Then, a visit to the grave was like that of Mary and Martha to the tomb of Lazarus, without his friend and theirs; now it is as if He himself is your companion, as the Resurrection and the Life. Should it chance to be Easter day, it is a double Easter to your soul, and you say with Blackburn—(1)

All is fresh and new,
Full of spring and light,
Wintry heart, why wear'st the hue
Of sleep and night—
Christ is risen!

Then, as you first contemplated that little mound, it was more like a heathen than a Christian, with the sense of an eternal separation—*vale, vale, longum vale!* and you said with Tennyson:

" Yes! in these ears till hearing dies,
The set, slow bell will seem to toll,
The passing of the sweetest soul
That ever looked with human eyes."

Now it is not only *Vale* (Farewell), but *Ave!* (Hail! in the bright Here-after!) Knowing the hand that was once nailed to the tree, is the same hand that holds the

(1) Dana's Household Poetry.



keys of Death and of Hell—you see there has been no mistake—you are convinced that there is no real loss, but that all will one day be made good, both for the life that now is, and that which is to come. Knowing that as Christ, the one mediator, is the only medium of communication between earth and heaven, so he is the only medium between heaven and earth; you seek not for other communications that are as utterly unauthorized as they are worthless and deceptive! Knowing that those who sleep in Jesus he shall one day bring with him; in the light of your recent experience of transmuted and sanctified affection, you confidently anticipate an eternal reunion infinitely more perfect than that dissolved on earth—the years that still separate you and those you love, within the veil, fast as they roll on, only bringing you the nearer together!

O how great the contrast in every possible respect between *then* and *now*! Then, under the influence of that supremely selfish “sorrow of the world that worketh death,” you hung your harp on the willow, and deemed perpetual grief and still increasing tears, the only real test of loyalty to the departed; now, even in the midst of dissolving gloom, the sudden sunshine through the rift in the broken cloud, leads you to *look up*! You feel that it is not their wish that you should mourn for them, nor for yourselves as those who have no hope, and *that your present sympathy with them is not real and complete until you rejoice more with them in their joy than you mourn for your own sorrow*. And, hark! ere ever you are aware, you are singing, “Jesus, Lover of my Soul!”

Then, how greatly were you tempted to say: “As I have done with the *joys*, so I have done with the duties of life; henceforth let the world take care of itself, and the church too.” Now, you have learned a new lesson, and feel a new desire for service; you have found a new brotherhood in the sons and daughters of affliction, your hearts go out to



them in every form, and like the Master himself, breathe upon those who mourn your choicest benediction.

Then you were in the Valley of Humiliation, if not in the valley of the shadow of death itself; now you have come out on the other side, far in advance of where you entered, and find yourselves on the Hill Clear with the perspective glass of the heavenly shepherd in your hand. From the heavy and ever-lengthening shadows that are cast by the setting sun on this side the grave, you look, as it were, across the lake, to the other shore, and see the shining gates of pearl in the New Jerusalem. *Nor do they seem so very far removed.* It is not merely "Light beyond"—as at the end of a long and tedious vista, but "Light here!" as you stand in the vestibule of that holy temple, "buildd of Godhead," of which "the Lamb is "the light thereof!"

Blessed, thrice blessed souls are they who have entered into the holy mystery of sorrow, who no longer view their bereavement from the narrow point of their own isolated selfishness, but in some good degree take in the whole bearing and intent of it—who have learned that the holier they are that suffer, and the more that they do suffer, the higher the ends for which they are afflicted, and therefore the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!

For many years there hung upon the walls of my chamber a painting of Ary Shaeffer—called "Christus Consolator." There, gathered round the Master, were the weary and heavy laden of every kind and degree—the slave, holding out his chains; the prisoner, longing for deliverance; the old man, whose prop was breaking under his despairing grasp; the dissatisfied child of ambition—the Magdalen—and others; but the chief place in the foreground was reserved for the bereaved mother, who was laying her dead babe at the feet of Jesus! Never, until of late, have I penetrated to its full depth and meaning,