

But so easy is the transmission of a letter now, that we often think a small sheet of paper with half a dozen sentences upon it enough to send even a long distance. It is not so, however, where the means of communication are more difficult and uncertain, as in the case of missionaries and travellers in uncivilized parts. The letters are so long waited for, and received at such rare intervals, must be long and full, for the writer longs to impart, and the reader to receive, news from home in unstinted measure.

No parent probably ever yearned over an absent child with more affectionate longings than Paul over those who were his children in the faith. 1 Thess. 2. 17; 3. 10. As he journeyed on from city to city, his heart went out in tender love and solicitude for the converts he left behind, more especially when he knew them to be exposed to trial and persecution. And the long letters he wrote to them were destined by the Holy Spirit of God for the comfort and instruction of Christians in after ages as well as of those for whom they were originally written.

The first of Paul's letters preserved in the word of God are those written to the believers in Thessalonica. The latter had already suffered persecution for the Gospel's sake, even before Paul left the city, and their trials appear to have continued. 1 Thess. 1. 6; 2. 14; 3. 3. They needed comfort under the afflictions they were passing through. They needed encouragement to hold steadfastly. And being unable to return to them himself, Paul wrote to give them this comfort and encouragement.

I remember a young English girl left at school in a foreign land. She had lived in a happy home, with every comfort around her. But her father had lost his fortune, and had started for a still more distant shore to try and retrieve his circumstances. Her two sisters were in situations as governesses. Now, where was her comfort, her hope for the future? It lay in her father's return. This was the one thing she looked forward to.

When Simon, the son of Jacob, was left bound in Egypt, while his brethren went back to their father and their homes in Canaan (Gen. 42. 14-24), left with the odium upon—as he supposed—of being a spy, what must have been the one thing in which he found encouragement and comfort? The thought of his brothers' return, accompanied by Benjamin, to vindicate his character, and restore him to freedom.

What enabled the beleaguered English garrison at Lucknow to "hold the fort," amid sickness, danger and death? The belief that Havelock would come to their assistance.

And so with the English people during

the absence of Richard Cœur de Lion in Palestine, and with the loyal Scotch during the early days of the Hanoverian monarchs in England. The panacea of all the ills they suffered lay for them in the return of their king.

The Thessalonian Christians were lonely in the midst of neighbours who could not understand them. They were misunderstood and slandered. Chap. 17. 7. They were in danger. They were troubled and persecuted on every hand. But they had a bright hope before them. Jesus, whom they loved and served, was coming again. This is the comfort the apostle sets constantly before them throughout his epistles. Chap. 1. 10; 2. 19; 3. 13; 2 Thess. 1. 7-10.

But among the Lucknow garrison many died before Havelock's arrival. They were absent on the joyful day of deliverance. And the Thessalonian Christians were saddened because some of their number had passed away. Would these lose the joy and glory of the day that was coming? Certainly not, Paul told them. Those who had died would just have the same share in it as those who were still alive. They, too, should hear the shout and the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, and they should be raised from the dead to "meet the Lord in the air." So the Christians of Thessalonica were told not to sorrow as others, but to "comfort one another with these words."

And this is the great comfort of Christians now, when one and another whom they love is taken away. People sometimes say: "O, if only So-and-so had been here!" or, "If So-and-so could have lived to see this day!" When the best day of all comes, all who have loved the Lord will be living and will be there.

But can every one look forward to the return of the Lord Jesus? That English school-girl was the only one in the school who longed for her father's return. It was nothing to the others, for he was not their father. Nor did the Egyptians care about Jacob's sons coming back to Egypt; they were not their brethren. That is why many care nothing about the coming of the Lord; he is nothing to them. But what did Havelock's arrival bring upon the rebel army that besieged Lucknow? And what does the return of the rightful King bring upon those who have usurped his inheritance and scorned his authority? Disappointment and defeat. So Paul warns us that the "day of the Lord" will come upon us as a "thief in the night," bringing sudden destruction." No one can say, "The Lord's coming will be nothing to me." It must either bring gladness and light, or it must bring terror and darkness, for he is King, and all men are