

TOIL AND REST.

When sets the weary sun
And the long day is done,
And starry orbs their solemn vigils keep;
When, bent with toil and care,
We breathe our evening prayer,
God gently giveth His beloved sleep!

When by some slanderous tongue
The heart is sharply stung,
And with the curse of cruel wrong we weep;
How like some heavy calm
Comes down the soothing balm,
What time He giveth His beloved sleep.

O, sweet and blessed rest,
With these sore burdens perished,
To lose ourselves in slumber long and deep;
To drop our heavy load
Beside the dusty road,
When He hath given His beloved sleep!

And on our closed eyes
What visions may arise!
What sights of joy to make the spirit leap!
What memories may return
From out their golden urn,
If God but giveth His beloved sleep.

And when life's day shall close
In death's last deep repose,
When the dark shadows o'er the eyelids creep,
Let us not be afraid
At this last thickening shade,
For so God giveth His beloved sleep.

To sleep? It is to wake
When the fresh day shall break—
When the new sun climbs up the eastern steep;
To wake with new-born powers,
Out from the darkened hours,
For so He giveth His beloved sleep.

To die? It is to rise
To fairer, brighter skies,
Where death no more shall his dread harvest reap;
To soar on angel wings
Where life immortal springs—
For so He giveth His beloved sleep.

THE PATH OF LIFE.

THE path of life is compared to the sea, to the wilderness, to the earthquake, and to the fire. To the sea, when the mind is tossed with tempest and not comforted, until He is pleased to arise who formerly said to the sea, "Peace, be still;"—to the wilderness, wherein we are taught to accept that food which He who feedeth the ravens seeth meet for us, although it may not always be gratefully to the natural desire;—to the earthquake, because the earthly mind in us must be shaken and removed out of its place, before we can be formed into the image of the heavenly;—and to the fire, whereby everything of the first nature that is opposed to the divine nature and excellence will be burnt up.

HOW TROUBLES COME AND GO.

THE story of affliction is the story of mistakes. We are all wrong here.

Let us think of a few points:—

1. God does not send our troubles. I do not deny God's superintending care and His over-ruling all things, bad and good. This is not, however, the common doctrine. It is this,—"All trial comes from God. All things are His work. He is the cause of all, and of all their details. He directly and alone sends our trials." A great mistake. God sends not the sickness, need, sorrow, loss, that come from man's imprudence, folly and wickedness. Nay more, God is not indirectly responsible for it. He does not even give the folly and the sin that cause such things. The evils and their causes are the work of others. "An enemy hath done this;" oftentimes is a man his own worst enemy, and needs no devil to torment him.

2. Sin does not send our troubles. I do not deny that sin is a fruitful cause of trouble. I have just said it is. But the Lord in the case of the man blind from his birth, and the cases of the Galileans and those in the tower of Siloam, has shown that trouble comes not always from sin, and that sin is not to be inferred from it. So it is folly to say *always* that a trouble is a call to repentance, as having been caused by sins needing repentance. True, all things that happen should teach a duty good for all times; but we do God wrong to suppose that in all the trials that men endure, from themselves and their fellowmen, God is working actively, and is punishing sin.

3. Man does not in his trouble turn from sin and turn to God. I do not deny that it is so sometimes. But how infrequently! Some keep God's law after being afflicted; some are like him who in his affliction did "trespass yet more." True, there is a great deal of sorrow in, if not on account of sin, in the case of the troubled heart,—just as there is a great deal of soberness in old age, and some attention to religion too. But the little that is done in youth and in prosperity is far better. "I spake unto thee in thy prosperity." Why is this voice not heard? Why do we call on the sick and the sorrowful to turn to God? "The living, he shall praise Thee;" and the more life he has, the more he ought to do it.

4. God does not heal our wounds. I do not deny that He does it, but I deny that He actively and specially does it always and in all cases when relief comes. It is not true that when anything comes of good to a man, it is the direct hand of God that has been stretched out to offer it. Men often think this when it is not the case.

Now why do I insist on these four things? Is it to lessen your sense of God's presence? God forbid. I desire to increase it, if the Lord will.

For what is the effect of the common cant about "the Lord," and his constant arrangement of all things? It is simply this,—No one thinks much of the *special* gifts and helps of God. The vague notion that all things are equally His work has thrust God out of His world, and denied Him the power of *special* interference. And it is the *special* interference in some cases that I am concerned to vindicate. Thus:—

1. God does sometimes send troubles. You can see in the details of some cases the mark of God's hand.

2. God does sometimes send troubles as the punishment of sin. And the circumstances of the case, as in many Bible stories, show who has "done it."

3. Troubles do sometimes lead men from sin to God. Not in common cases, but where God's *special* interference is recognized, and not always then.

4. God does sometimes heal and take away our troubles, as in many Bible stories, and as in the experience of Christian people now.

THE SIMPLE GOSPEL.

"The simplicity that is in Christ." 2 Cor. xi. 3.

I ONCE heard a person say, "How beautifully simple is the Gospel. I do not want to be puzzled with your mysteries. Let nothing be said to interfere with the simplicity of the Gospel."

And another person once said to me, "Why do you make such a mystery of the Sacrament? What can be simpler than, 'This do in remembrance of Me?'" I love the simplicity of that idea; keep to that, and do not trouble me with your mysteries about it."

Now listen to a parable. I was once walking along a road which had been mended with stones brought from a distance. I took up one of them, and shewed it to my companion, and asked him to describe its nature to me. He said, "It is a hard substance, worn round by being rolled about." I was not altogether satisfied, and asked for more information. He said, "Keep to that simple idea. It is a hard round substance. That is easy and simple. I like simplicity in every thing. You will get out of your depth by asking more. It is a hard round substance. Keep to that simple idea, and you are safe." Well! thought I to myself, I must be humble, I know. I will ask no more. I suppose nothing more is to be known about it.

Another day, I happened to walk along the same road with another companion. Mine eye fell on the very same stone, and so I could not resist the temptation.

I took it up and asked for information about it. To my great delight, my new companion told me more about it than I had ever supposed it possible for man to know. He taught me its various properties and uses. He broke it open, and took out a microscope from his pocket, and showed me a world of beauty and wonder in it. Positively, it was little else than one mass of exquisitely preserved shells, each one of which must have contained at some time a living creature. And this stone was only a little bit of a great bed of rock hundreds of feet thick, and many miles in area. Through the door of this opened stone my companion revealed to me a sight of astonishment into the former ages of the world, and taught me a lesson of instruction I shall never forget.

Well! thought I to myself again, is this better than beautiful simplicity, or not? Is it enough to know *one* quality of the stone, when there are dozens? Is not the word *simplicity* a wrong word to use about such things? *Complexity* would be better and more true. What manifold properties are there even in one little stone! What an amazing lesson of knowledge may be connected with even one little bit of a rock! My former dear companion must have beautifully cloaked his ignorance under the word *simplicity*?

The idea of calling the tremendous mysteries of

the Kingdom of Grace beautifully simple! Oh what simplicity forsooth is this! How does not rather even the very least Doctrine of the Gospel of God Incarnate branch out in all directions into infinity and eternity!

The fact is, the word "simplicity" in the present text means nothing of the kind whatever in that sense of simplicity. It means rather "sincerity and truth."

If there were no mysteries in the Christian religion; I could not believe it to be a true revelation; for it would be unlike all the other works of God. Rather I must expect to meet with the most stupendous mysteries of all in the true religion.

For instance, in the Sacrament before referred to; the Lord God Incarnate says to me, "Take, eat, This is My Body." What a stupendous mystery is here! Enough to overwhelm me in amazement every moment of my mortal life!

Oh pray for the person who overlooks the Mystery, and keeps to the simple idea of a bare act of Remembrance!

SEXTONS AND USHERS.

HERE is a church. A substantial building, not devoid of grace and beauty. The united efforts of the architects and the people—some of these latter, say four or five, in particular—have resulted in an attractive place of worship. Moreover, the surroundings are pleasant. The churchyard is cleared of sticks and stones. Rank weeds are not allowed here; no more are dry leaves. The grass is mown and the walks properly gavelled; while the lawn seems to have an understanding with *some one*, whose command, "Thus far and no further," is strictly obeyed. Altogether the place impresses us favourably. We are strangers in town; and on this particular Sunday morning we feel the force of early training and long habit, and so are led to seek a place of worship. We do not always go to Church—my friend and I. We do not spend two successive Sundays in a place, except when midsummer and midwinter holiday comes, when the mighty engine of business is stopped for oiling and repairs. We are not averse to church-going, however. We have, on the contrary, become satisfied that Sunday is pleasanter and more restful to us when a part of it is spent at church. This idea, with the still remembered teachings of our mothers—God bless them—has led us to this spot to-day. We go in. Vestibule is in good order, also the porch; and when we look at the neatly-dressed, middle-aged man who has hold of the bell-rope in the tower, we are convinced that he has had something to do with our coming to this particular place. "Will you have a seat, gentlemen?" "If you please." But here are the wardens, so that we do not need to take the sexton from his duty. It is a clear, crisp morning, but the church is very comfortable. It is not over-heated; it is not cold. There is no smoke. No dust on the seats. The carpet also is clean. There are no loose papers in the book-racks, or under the seats. Cobwebs are not visible on the ceiling or in the corners. The church has ventilating flues; and doubtless there are steam pipes in them. Now we believe that religion will not flourish in foul air. You cannot teach men the free blessings of the Gospel when you are parsimonious of so free a gift as fresh, pure air. It is as impossible as it is to instruct your boy in arithmetic while his head aches from inhaling the thrice-breathed air of an unventilated school-room. It is almost service time. The sexton has just passed with a note for the rector. We did not hear him. We only saw him; for he wears slippers. We like that man; and we are sure that here is one sexton who knows his business, and we wish that every church were equally fortunate. A good sexton is a pearl of great price.

The officers of this same church impress us favourably. They are courteous and affable to all, especially to strangers; and they do not seem to think it beneath them, or too great a tax to be at the church half an hour before service and to act as ushers. We have often felt that the Gospel contains the very principle upon which all hospitality is founded. Hence, the Church edifice should be hospitable, extending a hearty welcome to all who come. And who shall do it but the substantial men of the parish? These are to the ecclesiastical what the father is to the domestic home. These men represent the Church to the world. As in business integrity, as in social life, as in the management of parish finances, as in regular and devout attendance upon the Church worship, so should they represent the idea of courtesy to strangers. This course is in accord with the teaching and example of Christ; it is grateful to the recipients of such kindness; it is an important element in building up a parish, and nothing, it seems, can excuse the coldness and indifference so often manifested towards those who drop in casually, or toward that other class of resident strangers who would stay if they could.