

make out his pattern, and a certain number necessary to complete his work, so also here. It was necessary that you should have just such a wife; or that you, O woman! should have just such a husband! It was necessary that you should meet with that reverse which deprived you of your property,—that stroke of sickness which removed you into a corner,—that bereavement that smote down your first-born, or deprived you of the desire of your eyes, and removed lover and friend into darkness. There was a *needs* be for all those things which have variegated your life and made it so many-colored,—a *needs* be that you should just have had such an upbringing; such a father, mother, children; such surroundings: in order that the divine pattern which God had in His mind, should be realized. You are often perplexed, often at a standstill, in regard to the dispensations of Providence; but the day is coming, when, standing in the clear revealing light of heaven—when looking back upon the way in which you have been led, you will exclaim with a great number that have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb: “Great and marvellous are all Thy works, Lord God Almighty; righteous and true are all Thy ways, Thou King of saints.” The mason goes to his work, amid muss, and mud, and planks, and scaffolding, and piles of stone and loose material. He works, and works, not knowing very well the end for which he is working. But there stands over him a man with a bright eye in his head, and a splendid design in his mind, guiding all and directing all; and as the mason works, and works, amidst the dust and din from day to day, the design becomes more and more apparent, till the top stone is raised amidst shoutings of joy, and the building on which he has been laboring for years, shines forth in all its goodly proportions, as a monument of the country’s glory. So is it with the life of every believer. He is working, so to speak, amid the dust and dirt of common things; but God’s bright design is ripening—ripening every hour,—

“Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

“Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan His work in vain,—
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.

Such was the feeling of the poet, in looking back upon his checkered life; and similar was the feeling of the Apostle when he said: “I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

II.—In the next place, let me call your attention to the feelings with which the Christian contemplates the close of his earthly career. He looks upon himself as a conqueror, and death as a triumphal entry into that land of unclouded light and unsullied purity—where no tears are shed, and where no graves are dug, and where God’s people, rejoicing always before Him, go no more out, but are forever with the Lord. Long before now, the Apostle had expressed a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which, in his estimation, was far better; and now that his departure was at hand, that his work was done, that his mission was fulfilled—now that every grace was shining, and that patience had had her perfect work—we can imagine how his

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