

*Temporal loss.* Behold the man on whom prosperity used to smile. Friends were his, plenty was his, and no earthly blessing was needed to make his bliss complete. The sun shone brightly on his path; his bark glided smoothly on life's sea; his days passed over marked by no sorrow. But, alas! some huge calamity swept away all his treasures at once, or a series of lesser ills carried them off one by one, and now he is forsaken by his friends, and he lacks the necessities of life. His sun is dimmed by a cloud; his bark is driven by the storm; his days are full of woe.

*Bereavement by death.* Look at man in other circumstances. His fortune may have spared his wealth, but it has inflicted another and a deeper wound. His heart was once linked to another's by the bonds of fraternal love or hallowed friendship. Whether the union was that which binds husband and wife, parent and child, brother and sister, or even not related, their affection was holy, sweet, constant. But disease attacked one of them: then death ended the conflict, and severed the bonds which no weaker power in the world could slacken. O, it is a terrible blow to the parent when his loveliest flower is smitten; to the family, when he who was its support is the victim; and to the friend, when he who was as his own soul is buried out of his sight. Man feels as if his last earthly source of joy were gone; or, if he have others left, their supplies of comfort fail when needed most.

*Bodily affliction.* View man when the victim of another trial. He is the inmate of a sick chamber, and is seldom removed from a suffering bed. Many circumstances combine to render his a pitiable lot. He is shut in from the world and from friendly association; or, if a friend call to beguile his wearisome hours, new pangs of grief are awakened by the contrast which he draws between his visitor's enviable and his hapless situation. Pain racks his limbs; or, if a mild disease possess him his mind is more at liberty to ponder his wretchedness through the livelong day. His business declines, owing to his protracted absence from it; or, he looks at his family, which, if he does not soon recover, will be supported he knows not how. All nature seems to sadden and wither. His day of prosperity darkens, and a dismal cloud overhangs its close.

Now what can yield to man the needed support in these painful trials? Can *worldly toys* buoy up his drooping spirits, the glitter of the drawing-room, the luxuries of food, the society of merry associates, the soothing tones of music, the enrapturing visions of poetry or the enchanting scenes of the theatre? Alas! these might afford freshness to his joy, and stimulate his ardour when things went well with him, and his soul was imbued with pleasurable excitement; but in these his sober moments, and under these afflictive sorrows, he discovers their nothingness, and exclaims, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity!" He wants a firmer prop to rest upon; a surer hope to trust in; a more substantial portion to feed his spirit with.