

least prepared to understand that the baptism of tears may be that which fits us for the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

We ask, therefore, appealing to our own experience and to theirs, whether we cannot distinctly trace a great part of what is noblest and best to what we have suffered. Has it been the prosperity or the adversity of life which has ministered most truly to our manliness of thought, to our love of virtue, to our capacity of real enjoyment? Let us take this question with us in the retrospect of the last ten years, for example, and try the good and evil of life by this practical test. Out of that experience could we now best afford to lose the working of our joys or of our sorrows? Has pleasure or pain done the most for us? Has the house of mourning or the house of feasting taught us the most? From what source have our noblest thoughts come? How have the purest affections been cultivated? If we are conscious that our love of virtue is stronger than it was, and that we are learning to live more habitually in the divine presence, have we learned it in the time of vigorous health, or upon the bed of sickness? Has God ever seemed so near to us as in the chamber of death? Has eternity ever been so real as when we have returned from standing at the open grave? Could we have known how much we loved those whom God had given, unless He had taken them away? Could we love those who are left with the same disinterested, prayerful, religious affection that we now feel, if we had not been taught to love them for eternity as well as for the present world?

We think that these questions lead us to a true answer. Our hearts may struggle against it, because of their weakness; but our profoundest experience teaches its truth. There is almost no really valuable experience, almost no