

ever will be again; that the more vigorously you begin, the more successfully you will finish; that the more severe your discipline is at first, the easier will your trials be at last; that the heavier your burdens are now, the stronger you will be to bear them by and by, and the lighter they will be to bear. He who is willing to take the hardest way at first, will, in that very choice, find for himself the easiest way in the end!

If it be any encouragement to know that those who have been tasked as you, tempted as you, tried as you, discouraged as you, wearied as you, faint as you, have nevertheless persevered unto victory—take that encouragement, and go on in your way rejoicing! If any of you have been tempted to swerve, cease your faint-heartedness, and remember that nothing strange has befallen you! You are suffering only such temptations as have befallen all God's children, and you may be sure that he will not suffer you to be tempted more than you are able to bear! I suppose that there is not one saint who now stands elate and jubilant in heaven, who could not narrate experience equivalent to yours. It would be different in form, but the same in substance. It would show the same necessity of toils and burdens, of discipline and trial, of struggle and conflict! It may not be a great comfort to know that they who went before you were embarrassed and perplexed; but it is a comfort to know that your difficulties and embarrassments are not because you are not a Christian, and that they are incident to all Christian life!

When men come to swollen streams, which they must needs ford, they look with troubled face upon the wide and rapid water; and it is a great comfort to see fresh hoof-marks along the bank, which show that other travellers have recently crossed that way. They drive down to the water's edge, but still dreading to venture in, look at the foam and the anger of the torrent, fearful that sudden freshets, loosed from the mountain side, may have over-swollen it since its passage by those who are ahead. They hear the sound of voices on the other side, of men whom they can not see, in that dense forest, yet who have just gone over the river, and are not yet out of hailing distance. The tremulous men at the brink call out: "Ho! strangers, is the river passable?" And as the sound dies away among the forest trees, the salute is answered, as with an echo: "We have just crossed! All safe!—Come on!" At this summons, they step in, but in a moment the water grows deeper, and the roar of the flood is more fearful! Every man among them is bewildered. The stoutest heart quails. The water is already pattering around the flanks of the horses, and is getting deeper and deeper every moment. The foremost rider looks around almost as if he would go back! Ah! my friend, you can not go back now! It is perilous to turn round in a ford. It is as easy to go all the way over to the other side, as to go back from where you started! They begin to be more alarmed; but the men already over, who have come back again to the bank to see how those who are following them may fare, smile to see the fear that is written upon their troubled faces. The water is above the saddles, and is careering over the horses' backs. Every man now says to himself: "It is swim or drown;