

from the suffering of even mental depression, so touchingly described by the poet as

"A grief without a sigh, void, dark and drear,
A stifled, drowsy, unimpassion'd grief,
That finds no natural outlet, no relief
In word, or sigh, or tear!"

Think of the mercy of having been able to enjoy God's beautiful world, and to feel the life in its scenery, its music, and its blue sky, during the summer that has passed, as you walked along the sea-shore, among the woods, across the green fields, up the glen, over the moorlands, or gazed on the glorious landscape from the windy summits of the old hills. Health of body and of mind!—Oh, common, most blessed, yet, alas! how often unnoticed, gifts of God!

Have you received other mercies connected with your *temporal* well-being? Perhaps at the beginning of the year (as at the beginning, may be, of many a year before) things looked very dark for you and yours. Yet "hitherto" God has helped you. You may never have had more light on your path than what enabled you to take the next step with safety, but that light has never failed you. God has been pleased thus to discipline many of his people. You may, possibly, remember also peculiar deliverances:—from sickness; from money difficulties; from bodily dangers; with unexpected additions to your means of comfort and of usefulness.

Again, call to remembrance your *social* mercies, which have come more directly through others. Think of the relations and friends who have been spared to you! Begin with your dearest, and pass on from those to others less closely allied, but still most valued, and number them all, *if you can*. Do any remain whom death threatened to remove during the past year? Have any, have many, been a comfort to you? Have your anxieties regarding the well-being of others been lessened? Have beloved ones been given to you during the year—such as a wife, a husband, or a child? If God hath led you in this way during the past year, it ought indeed to be remembered.

And if those Christian friends have fallen asleep in Jesus, then it is a great mercy to know most certainly that they are your friends still, and your *best* friends, too; and you shall thank God for the happiness which they now enjoy, and which you hope to share with them.

But you have other mercies to remember besides these. Surely much has been done for your spiritual good by your Father in heaven. He has shown patience, forbearance, and long-suffering toward you; and has been teaching you during these past months by faithful ministers or faithful friends; and has been striving within you to bring you to Himself, and keep you there. Have you enjoyed no peace in believing, nor gained any victories over self and sin? Have you

possessed no more calm and habitual fellowship with God? Have you done no good? Has prayer neither been offered in truth, nor answered in love? Has all been fruitless and dead? Oh, let us beware of the falsehood of denying spiritual mercies bestowed on us by God! "If I should say I know Him *not*, I should be a liar like unto you," said our Lord. The graces of the Spirit, the least of them, are the earnest of eternal good, the assurances of enjoying the whole fullness of God.

BUT YOU HAVE SORROWS TO REMEMBER. Alas! we are in little danger of forgetting these. The sunny days may come and go unheeded, but the dark ones are all registered. We cannot forget that "the Lord taketh away;" but why do we not as vividly remember that the same Lord "*giveth*," and that in both cases we have equal cause, did we only see it, to exclaim, "Blessed be the name of the Lord!" I ask not what these sorrows have been. Enough that they are very real to you, or to those who are bound up with you in the bundle of life. It was a weary time to you in the wilderness, and it is well to remember that portion of the way in which you have been led, which was as a dark valley and shadow of death.

AND WHAT OF SIN? That is what makes it so hard for us to remember the past journey. The backslidings and falls in the way; the careless straggling behind; the lazy resting places; the slow progress; the careless devotions; the misspent days of the Lord; the opportunities lost of doing good to others, or of receiving good ourselves, through procrastination, sloth, and indifference; the manifestation of our unloving and selfish spirit toward our brother, in envy, bad temper, backbiting jealousy, or unguarded speech; the little done or given for God's work on earth, in charity to the poor, or to "our own flesh" who required assistance;—the everything, in short, which deters memory from looking steadily at what it could blot out for ever from its record! Yet it is of great importance that this portion of the journey should be remembered; although it is not for the way in which God led us, but which we choose for ourselves in our ignorance and self-will. Ponder it well! Recall what your conduct has been in avoiding temptation; how you have made use of the means of grace; the days in which you may have lived without God, or if you prayed to Him, when you did so as a form, without any real faith or love; the days in which you have been so presumptuous as to live without "faith in the Son of God," and to meet trials, temptations, and duties, without seeking strength from the Holy Spirit; the Sundays that have come and gone without having been improved, and sermons heard in vain, and public worship joined in outwardly only; the little help, or possibly great discouragement given to Christian ministers and members by your