

## FORTITUDE.

"If thou faintest in the day of adversity, thy strength is small."—*Proverbs.*

THE day of adversity is common to us all, but its dreary aspects differ, as we differ from one another. In wild tempestuous gloom it breaks suddenly upon one, while his fellow has it down under the sullen pall of unalleviated misery. The phases of calamity are as various as our characters, nor is it a random arrow which reaches the vulnerable part. The unbroken lowering stillness and monotony of the long dark day of trial, is, perhaps, harder to endure than the sharp strife of more passionate woe. Sordid pangs, unemployed faculties, the humanizing culture of gentle tastes and pleasant feelings, almost wholly restricted; sorrow without love, pain without dignity,—are not these things hard to bear? To the haughty and impatient spirit such griefs are terrible. It is not easy to learn that submission is the only wise remedy. We go to broken cisterns, and drink of waters in which lies no healing power. We rebel against our suffering. We say—"I have done no evil." "I am not worse than those who sport in the sunshine; I will throw down my burden, and be as happy as they. I do well to be angry? Why should my gourd wither in a night? I have no leisure for grief." We forget that "he who lacks time to mourn, lacks time to mend;" and lose sight of the fact, that where there is no sin, there is no sorrow. But to take to heart the lessons of adversity, and submit to learn that "it is good for us to be afflicted," it is not necessary that we should be abject and faint-hearted in our extremity. Lord Byron, so often shallow in philosophy and flippant in speech, saw the truth, and spoke it nobly, when he said—"I knew my fault, and feel my punishment not less, because I suffer it unbent." And the serene and gracious Horace had discovered long before that—

"To endure,  
Alleviates the pang we may not crush, nor cure."

The spirit that rises to meet disaster, the grand fortitude which accepts silently the blow no struggle can avert, the repentant heart which acknowledges "I have sinned;" this is the proof-armour which guards us in the conflict—these the weapons whose true temper secures us victory. How great was David, when, after vainly imploring the life of the beloved child, he arose, and washed, and anointed himself, and ate bread. No rebellious nuisance, no frantic complaint issues from the lips of late so eloquent with the passionate entreaties of a stricken heart. Only that lofty reply to his astonished servants: "While the child was yet alive I fasted and wept, for I said, who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me," as he once more renews the business of life, and remembers the cares and duties of a king.

And when our misfortunes are traceable to the malignity of a foe, how well would it be for us to weed out the bitterness from our hearts, and strive to emulate the magnanimity of that royal nature. There is nothing grander in the records of humanity than David's appeal to Saul, when, with the severed skirt in his hand, he followed the unstable and treacherous monarch from the cave which might have been his tomb. Even the jealous and vacillating tyrant is forced to exclaim, "Thou art more righteous than I."

In what contrast to this noble faith stands the piteous agony of the ruined Saul, when, with the lingering credulity of a weak and superstitious mind, he resorts for aid to those whom, in his more prosperous days, he had punished and despoiled. As the imagination recalls that sublime scene, the solemn phantom rises, and we seem to listen to the reproachful question, "Why hast thou disquieted me?" and hear the awful reply, "God is departed from me, and answereth me no more." Who can read even now the fateful story, without feeling for the desolate king a thrill of that tenderness and compassion which filled the heart of the woman of Endor, when she said, "Let me set a morsel of bread before thee,

and eat, that thou mayest have strength when thou goest upon thy way," though no brave man can give him sympathy.

Despair never ennobled sorrow, nor purified the sufferer. No man is entitled to say, "I am forsaken," until he has forsaken himself, and the forlorn heart never appealed to the great Comforter and came empty away. By what process that heavenly balm descends, the mourner has no knowledge; about the mystery of that result of humble faith, his reason will not enlighten him; but he knows that he is comforted, and no more alone.

It is not to John Bunyan's day of ease and freedom that we owe the immortal allegory which has since strengthened so many fainting souls. The star of that serene mind shone steadily through dungeon gloom, and the ray of its bright example is still shed over the dark domain of captivity and oppression. And what a fine tranquillity pervaded his thoughts, who, in great misfortune, sang—

"Stone walls do not a prison make,  
Nor iron bars a cage;  
Minds innocent and quiet take  
That for a heritage."

But the calm philosopher of the temperate heathen, and the simple reliance of the Christian, alike differ from that rude insensibility manifested by some natures. There is no merit in dogged endurance, no renovating power in the calamity which falls upon an obdurate heart. It was not thus that our sinless Pattern encountered distress and pain. He was not ashamed to be "acquainted with grief" and familiar with the pangs which chasten humanity. His soul was sorrowful even unto death, yet we, poor sinners, are often too stubborn for regret—too proud to pass through the furnace of affliction. Such as these need not be envied. They may escape the cup of bitterness, but with it they renounce the sweet compensations of nature.

Think of the lofty courage of "Tasso" sustaining his soul, in a dark and cruel age, by the light and beauty of a pure imagination. Resolutely turning from the strife of an agonized heart, he escaped to the vivid scenes of his glorious fable, and peopled his solitude with a company of martial men, and lonely women, transfigured into superhuman beauty by the atmosphere of heroic deeds.

And if the exiled "Dante" did not always preserve the unshaken composure of a great soul, if he ate the bread, and drank the bitter waters of affliction in wrath, rather than in humility, he nevertheless turned pain to grand uses, and we are the inheritors of the sublime fruit of his tribulation.

Nor should we ever forget that we are in righteous hands—hands that inflict no needless pang. Of justice we are sure, and happily for the best of us, not justice alone. Let us be thankful that He reigns, who, in wrath, always remembers mercy, and rejoice that we have such an one to rule over us. Who cannot trust Him? Which of us cannot have proof, if he will, of His unwearied compassion, His faithful promises, His omnipotent hand? If treacherous friends wound us, He will send truer and dearer ones to fill the vacant place in our hearts, and soothe and sustain the shattered mind. In like manner will He atone to the brave and humble spirit for all its griefs and all its privations, and the sun of His love will enliven the gloom of our adversity, even though our "strength be small."

Halifax, N.S.

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## ABOUT HANDS.

THERE is a significance in the different modes of shaking hands, which indicates, so far as a single act can do, the character of the person. The reader who has observed may recall the peculiarities of different persons with whom he has shaken hands, and thus note how characteristic was this simple act.

How much do we learn of a man or a woman by the shake of the hand? Who would expect to get a handsome donation—or a donation at all—from one who puts out two fingers to be

shaken, and keeps the others bent, as upon an "itching palm?" The hand coldly held out to be shaken, and drawn away again as soon as it decently may be, indicates a cold, if not a selfish and heartless character; while the hand which seeks yours and unwillingly relinquishes its warm, hearty clasp, belongs to a person with a genial disposition and a ready sympathy with his fellow-men.

In a momentary squeeze of the hand how much of the heart often oozes through the fingers! Who, that ever experienced it, has ever forgotten the feeling conveyed by the eloquent pressure of the hand of a dying friend, when the tongue has ceased to speak.

A right hearty grasp of the hand indicates warmth, ardor, executiveness, and strength of character; while a soft, lax touch, without the grasp, indicates the opposite characteristics. In the grasp of persons with large-hearted, generous minds, there is a kind of whole "soul" expression, most refreshing and acceptable to kindred spirits.

But when Miss Weakness presents you with a few cold, clammy, lifeless fingers for you to shake, you will naturally think of a hospital, an infirmary, or the tomb. There are foolish persons who think it pretty to have soft, wet, cold hands when the fact is, it is only an evidence that they are sick; or that, inasmuch as the circulation of the blood is partial and feeble, they are not well; and unless they bring about a change, and induce warm hands and warm feet, by the necessary bodily exercises, they are on the road to the grave—cold hands, cold feet, and a hot head are indications of anything but health.

Time was, in the old country, when aristocracy deigned to extend a single finger, or, at most two, to be shaken by humble democracy. Even now we hear of instances in which "my noble lady" repeats the offence when saluted by a more humble individual. This is an indignity which no true man or woman will either offer or receive. Refinement and true gentility give the whole hand, and respond cordially, if at all. This is equivalent to saying, "You are welcome;" or, when parting, "Adieu! God be with you!"

There is a habit, among a rude class, growing out of an over-ardent temperament on the part of those who are more strong and vigorous than delicate or refined, who give your hand a crushing grasp, which is often most painful. In these cases there may be great kindness and "strong" affection, but it is as crude as it is hearty.

Another gives you a cold, flabby hand, with no temperature or warmth in it, and you feel chilled or repelled by the negative influence imparted, and you are expected to shake the inanimate appendage of a spiritless body.

Is the grasp warm, ardent, and vigorous? so is the disposition. Is it cool, formal, and without emotion? so is the character. Is it magnetic, electrical, and animating? the disposition is the same. As we shake hands, so we feel, and so we are. Much of our true character is revealed in shaking hands.

But why do we shake hands at all? It is a very old-fashioned way of indicating friendship. We read in the Book of books that Jehu said to Jehonadab:—"Is thy heart right as my heart is with thine heart? If it be, give me thine hand." And it is not merely an old-fashioned custom. It is a natural one as well. It is the contact of sensitive and magnetic surfaces through which there is, in something more than merely a figurative sense, an interchange of feeling. The same principle is illustrated in another of our modes of greeting. When we wish to reciprocate the warmer feelings, we are not content with the contact of the hands—we bring the lips into service. A shake of the hands suffices for friendship, among undemonstrative Anglo-Saxons, at least, but a kiss is a token of a more tender affection.

*Music.*—The winds caught and tamed.

*Plough.*—Man's title deed to the earth.

*Memory.*—A look thrown back on the road we have travelled.

*Time.*—The scene-shifter to the world's drama.