

THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN.

“And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”—Luke xxii. 44.

How little can we understand of the sufferings of Jesus! Into the sacred sanctuary of His sorrows who dares to enter? Our best attempts to come near to Him leave us standing at a distance, gazing upon Him afar off. The sea of His grief was deep, and we behold Him tossed to and fro as by an unseen hand, but we hear very little of the fury of the storm. A shallow, superficial nature heave and roars beneath the slightest breeze of affliction; but the holy nature of Jesus, calm and deep at all times, scarcely utters a moan amid the terrors of the most dreadful storm. Very few and slight are the intimations of His sorrows, who was most emphatically “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” From His own lips we can gather but little to guide us over the dark and dreadful sea where for a time He appeared to drift, forsaken, naked, desolate, and alone. The great ocean of His anguish was too deep to utter its voice. Its great waves heave and roll on beneath the eye in awful majesty and silence. Jesus seldom spoke while all the waves and billows of God’s wrath were passing over Him, and of the meaning of the few words which He did utter we can apprehend but little. His grief was too deep for tears, too great for words. “Behold,” said one of old, “and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.” No doubt the sorrows of this good man were great; still we could have understood them, and felt for him, for he was a man, like unto ourselves. But Jesus—the holy, the pure, the unselfish Jesus—how can we appreciate His? And yet it is right that we should strive to apprehend at least a little of His sorrows, for they were the sorrows of humanity, and most emphatically our own. He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows; “the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.” May the Holy Spirit guide our meditations!

“And being in an agony he prayed more fervently.” What could be the cause of

His anguish? As yet His back was not given to the scourge, nor His sacred temples to the thorns. His quivering flesh shrunk not as yet from the rugged nails; nor was his body oppressed by His weighty cross. What could it be, then? Ah, there was a Hand present, administering the elements of a bitter cup, which no human eye could perceive. There was a pressure from the hand of God which no soul could feel but His own. “It pleased the Father to bruise him.” Jesus suffered not simply as a man, but as the Surety of His people. There sins were upon Him by imputation, and the hand of His Father’s justice must inflict the penalty. Already some few drops of the coming storm have fallen upon His holy soul, and amazed, and prostrate, and full of agony unutterable, He falls to the ground. His very pores were blood. O sin, sin, sin! what hast thou done? This is thy dreadful work;—’twas thou, my soul—thy sins which brought the Father’s hand upon His Son, until He weeps and cries, “If it be possible, let this cup pass away.” He saw in the distance the cruel soldiery, the purple robe, the crown of thorns, the weary journey, the infuriated crowd, the lingering, protracted death; but it was not the apprehension of these which filled His soul with agony,—there were deeper wounds than these, and even now He felt their smart. His Father’s hand must smite Him, and from the enjoyment of His love He must for a time be cut off. This was the dread penalty He must endure, and it was this which

“Made the sacred drops of anguish fall.”—

and drew such importunate cries from His lips. Think of this, O my soul! and learn to hate those sins which placed a gulph between even the soul of the holy Jesus and that Father whom He so loved.

But deep as was the agony of Jesus, it sealed not up His lips, nor prevented the access of His spirit to God. He still embraced the Hand which smote Him. The storm was severe, but still His simple, confiding, and child-like faith pointed to His Father in Heaven. His God had said, “He would hold His hand;” and now that the deep waters have come in to His soul, and He sinks where there is no standing, He pleads and rests upon