

Is there no hope for the wailing tide ; no redemption for the scattered spray ?

I have seen what has seemed to me a sweet and touching answer to this question. Over the desolate sands a quiet mist has been drawn, while the sea moaned far away down at low tide. And I seemed thus taught how even earth's wrecks may be repaired, and earth's ruin turned into gain. Better to give to God the fresh sparkle and the first eager and joyous onset of life. But if not, and if the waves must set towards some earth shore, until they are broken, sullied, and wrecked there, see what the rising mist teaches. Let them remember themselves, and at last come homeward, leaving the stain and the defilement behind. So merciful is God, that the very ruins and disappointments of earth are all messages of his patient love to us. If we will not turn at first to him, he will let us break our hearts upon the shore of earth, content if but at last our hopes and aspirations will rise in a pure repentant mist from their first overthrow and ruin, and wait beside the gate of heaven, touched now with the clear moonlight of peace, and expecting the rich sunburst of glory hereafter. The very disappointments and dissatisfactions of earth may thus rise, spiritualized and purified, to God at last.

This, no doubt, is the intention of the disappointments and inadequacies of earth, upon which the heart, in the time of the coming in of the tide, spends so much of its powers, and against which it bursts and dies down into cries and sighings. This is the intention,—an intention, alas! too often unfulfilled. For if God is saying, "Turn, my children, from earth's pursuits, excitements, and enterprises, to heavenly aspirations, letting your heart and mind, like rising mist from broken waves, ascend, instead of dwelling in tears on the bare sands that were never worth the winning,—ascend thither, whither he who loved you is gone before, and continually dwell with him, in the place called Fair Havens, where the waves of this troublesome world have ceased their restless, eager quest, and are lulled into a peace beyond all understanding"—if God thus invites us, by the very sign of our broken, retiring waves, there is another voice, commonly heard, and too often heeded,—a voice counselling hardness, repining, rebellion: a moan of sullenness, of hardness, of despair, of defiance,—a voice that whispers, "Curse

God and die," rather than. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." The voice, oh let us be assured, of folly, not of wisdom; of our enemy, and not of a friend.

The waves are still tumbling upon the shore; with scarce perceptible progress they have advanced really a broad piece since I took my station here. Ever gathering their forces in long parallels, ever bending and falling, and seething back in long sheets of white foam, seemingly ever repulsed, but really ever advancing, they recall to my mind an idea of great beauty and truth that I have somewhere met with, though where I cannot recall. It compared the earnest, humble Christian's progress in holiness to this coming in of the tide. The healthy Christian life will always be advancing; there must ever be a progression in holiness. Stagnant water is deteriorating water; it does not remain the same as when it ceased to flow. And this oft-repeated truth will come saddest home to the more earnest, who are therefore the more humble. There ought to be, there *must* be an advance, if the water be a living sea, and not a stagnant pool. But dare we hope that there is any such progress, such steady, continuous advance in our own Christian life? Alas! we look sadly back at it and see long lines of earnest endeavours, at least of passionate yearnings after better things, after perfection, after the beauty of holiness, after Christ-like consistency; they came in, and come in still, bright perhaps, and intent, and resolved;—and lo! how they trip and fall as they reach the shore of trial, and slide back, losing all the ground again! Ever advancing, only to recede: ever rising, but to fall; ever trying, yet still baffled; only able to weep over their own weakness, and to sigh ever with a depression that men call a morbid pain. New yearnings at every special time of solemn self-examination; new resolves, driven on by the breath of prayers; new endeavours; and, after all, old failures! How the waves come in, earnest, but impotent, each running up the little way on the shore that its predecessor had attained, and giving ground again, to be succeeded by another as weak. But sometimes, amid all this history of failures, which may well keep us humble, there is another analogy with the rising tide besides that of its endless endeavours and endless failings. There is, as with the waters, *an advance upon the whole*, though they seem to keep much the same point, and to be doing little