

**"THERE IS A PEACE THAT COMETH AFTER
SORROW."**

"There is a peace that cometh after sorrow,"
Of hope surrendered, not of hope fulfilled;
A peace that looketh not upon to-morrow,
But calmly on a tempest that is stilled.

A peace which lives not now in joys excession,
Nor in the happy life of love secure;
But in the unerring strength the heart possesses
Of conflicts won while learning to endure.

A peace there is, in sacrifice secluded;
A life subdued, from will and passion free;
'Tis not the peace which over Eden brooded,
But that which triumphed in Gethsemane.

The Century.

**WHEN THE WORST COMES TO THE WORST HOPE
THOU IN GOD.**

After an overwhelming sorrow the soul's immediate business is with God. We can only "catch at God's skirt and pray." Where the one feeling is agony, the one thought must be God. When experience plunges deep into the gloom it is far less easy than might be thought to lay hold upon God and to enter into active communion with him. More particularly in the darkness, which is the nurse of heavy thought, in the hour when the stings burn again fiercely we may feel that we are forsaken alike of God and man. Sorrow, like a beast of prey, devours at night, and every sad heart knows how eyelids, however wearied, refuse to close upon as wearied eyes, which gaze wide open into the blackness and see dreadful things there. This man felt as if God's finger was pushing up his lids and forcing him to stare into the night, buffeted as if laid on an anvil and battered with the shocks of doom. He cannot speak, he can only moan as he is doing. Prayer seems to be impossible, but to say, "I cannot pray, would that I could!" is surely a prayer which will reach its destination, though the sender knows it not.

"I would lift my voice to God and cry;
I would lift my voice to God that He may give ear to me.
In the day of my straits I sought the Lord;
My hand was stretched out in the night without ceasing,
My soul refused to be comforted.
When I remember God I must sigh;
When I muse, my spirit is covered with gloom.
Then hast held open the guards of my eyes;
I am buffeted and cannot speak."

But this psalmist, though he found no ease in remembering God or in turning to a brighter past, was able to turn his thoughts to the great deeds of God and to hold by them. He went on:

"Then I said, It is my sickness;
But I will remember the years of the right hand of the
Most High.
I will celebrate the deeds of Jehovah,
For I will remember Thy wonders of old,
And I will meditate on all Thy work,
And will muse on Thy doings."

Gradually by recalling the past, by thinking of how God shines upon us from the sky that we have left behind, we become reassured, and are persuaded that his glory will not be absent from the clouded heaven towards which our worn faces are set. To the Christian this should be far easier since Christ has come. "If I were God," said Goethe, "the woes of the world I had created would break my heart." The reply is that the woes of the world did break God's heart. Christ our Lord passed through where the waters of sorrow ran deepest and chilliest and angriest, and in his grief and in his sympathy we have the sympathy and the grief of God. In the crisis of our trouble it should not discourage us that we are dumb, and that the thoughts which should have brought us quickest and readiest solace fail for the moment to comfort us. Let us be sure that Christ is in the dark room keeping the soul that is dear to him alive, driving back in the darkness its most formidable and deadly foes. Let us nourish the thoughts of Christ's priestly suffering and his priestly compassion, and in due time the poor heart will begin to unpack itself; we shall be able to speak to God through Christ, and the answer will come. We shall know that we are not calling to a deaf or remote God, but that prayer is verily answered.

Of course, for a time, for a long time it may be, there can be no change in our circumstances, but it does not follow that because the circumstances must remain unaltered no change may pass upon us. There can be an uplifting

and comforting of the heart which we are altogether unable to explain. "Sometimes a light shines;" some word of joy reaches us direct from God, and though it is by far too soon for us to indicate the rationality of our peace we are to remember that the peace needs no indication, and we are to accept it as a direct and precious gift from God. Even if only the sharpness the pain is eased, if the march of the slow dark hours is in the least degree quickened, there is much reason for gratitude and for hope.

At first it is certainly best to seek no human alleviation or comfort except, it may be, the most sacred and the most intimate. Expressions of love may bring their solace with them, but it is not well that we should speak much at first of our great sorrows. Expression is but too apt to react upon emotion, and to make the burden heavier. But when the response of sympathy is less complete than we desire—and such it must almost inevitably be—a new pang is added to our grief. There come hours in life when for the sake and succor of others we must recall the worst of the dreadful past; but, saving for these hours, the secret should be left with our God and Saviour.

Then as some recovery is experienced, as some strength creeps back, it is well to lay hold of what earthly helps and solaces are within our reach. Many sufferers have testified that the most agonizing time of their sorrow was not in the first weeks, when they were thrown back upon God. It came when they returned to work, when they obeyed again the ordinary summonses of life, and when they realized with a slow distinctness and a dull pain how irrevocable everything had changed. For all this it is best that we should go back to stand at our old post, however difficult, irksome and distasteful the routine of life must be for many days. However sharp and terrible the recurrences of the pain, it is best that the mind should be occupied with honest labor, and for many it is best that that labor should exceed and not fall under the ordinary measure. Innumerable sufferers have testified that the resolute and unflinching resumption of life and work again drove back many of the worst foes, and brought them back a certain rest, even though it was only the rest of weariness. Whatever can be done for the physical condition ought to be done. Perhaps more heed should be paid to the "hygiene of sorrow," for the suffering is physical as well as mental. No wise counsel of this kind should be disdained, and whatever lawful solaces God puts within our reach, we are free to avail ourselves of them. Times of great trouble often reveal the meanness of human nature and the selfishness of much apparent friendship. The sufferer emerging from the storm finds himself lonely and in the midst of a desolation which is like the oblivion that waits for the dead. But often, on the other hand, one finds himself infinitely richer than he had supposed. A true affection manifests itself in many from whom he looked for nothing. It is wise, it is Christian, generously, unreservedly, gratefully in the hour of our overthrow to accept what friends can do for us, and we should welcome with an eager gratitude the hour when "the low beginnings of content are heard again." No sorrow should be nursed and cherished. Sorrows should not be despised, it is true; our business is not so much to get over them as to get through them; but there are some who encourage them and foster them, and deem themselves guilty of a kind of treason when their eyes are open to breaks in the clouds. All sinful, all cowardly escapes are barred to the Christian, but there are many which are open to him, and to which he is made welcome. Those are happiest, it has been said, whom a great sorrow strengthens while it saddens, and who can carry on the past into the present in lonely fortitude. It may be so, but there are some in whom sorrow seems to be destroying the very power of love and the piety of memory, and if there is opened up to them a new spring of happiness they are to drink from it. As one has testified: "The whole history is something like a miracle legend, but instead of any former affection being displaced in my mind I seem to have recovered the living sympathy that I was in danger of losing. I mean that I had been conscious of a certain drying up of tenderness in me, and now the spring seems to have risen again."

It may be, however, it will almost certainly be, that