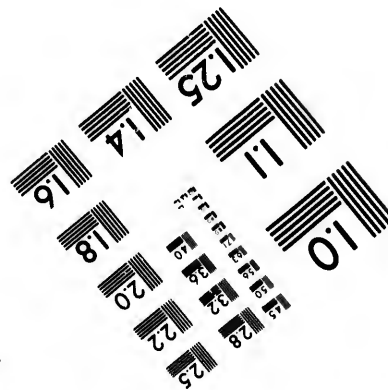
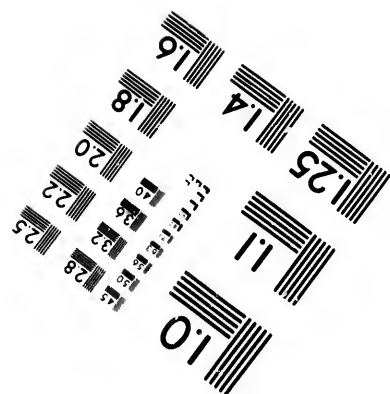
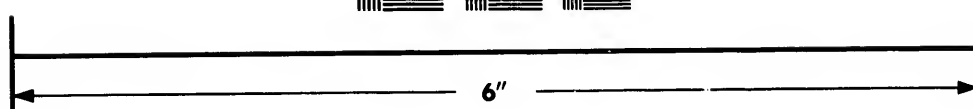
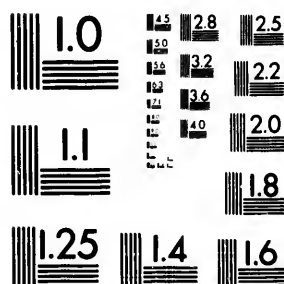


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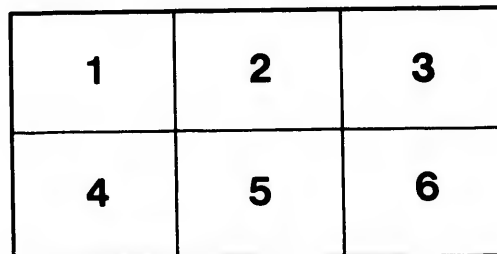
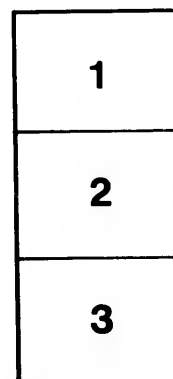
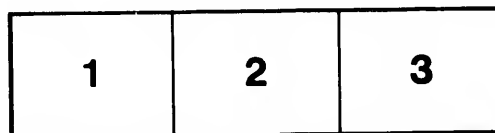
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COMFORT FOR THE SICK

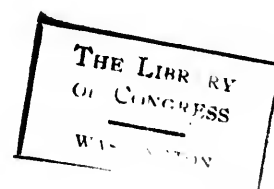
Comfort ye, comfort ye my people,
saith your God.—ISAIAH XL, 1.

BY
WILLIAM E. MCLENNAN

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PREFATORY NOTE.

“COMFORT for the Sick” is not a plea in behalf of some new nostrum for the ills of the flesh. It is a message of consolation to the soul. That it may, in some slight measure, prepare the way for Him whose touch gives “infinite calm,” is the sincere wish of

THE WRITER.

NOW a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of 'God might be glorified thereby. (John xi, 1-4.)

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. (1 Cor. x, 31.)

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COMFORT FOR THE SICK.

THE desire for comfort," says
Phillips Brooks, "may be a
very high or a very low, a noble
or a most ignoble wish." Whether
it shall be the one or the other is
determined by the object for which
comfort is sought. If it means cessa-
tion from pain and nothing more, the
desire for it is no higher than the crav-
ing for an opiate. On the other hand,
if one seeks comfort so that he may be
stronger to bear, not only his own ills,
but those of others also, his desire for
it is most commendable.

BLESSED are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. (Matt. v, 4.)

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. (Isaiah lxj, 1-3.)

COMFORT FOR THE SICK.

There are some who say that the sick do not need comfort, but advice; they should be told the nature of their sickness, and have cited the remedies and regimen necessary for their recovery. This was the ground taken by the friends of Job. But the result of their colloquy was not altogether satisfactory. Job replies to their plethoric advice by telling them that they are physicians of no value.

Others will tell us that since sickness is the common lot of all, whatever comfort we may need must be found in the thought that our afflictions neither differ from nor are harder to bear than those of millions of the race. Miserable comforters, miserable com-

FOR it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. (Hebrews ii, 10.)

✱+✱

For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted. (Hebrews ii, 16-18.)

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fort! In the Scriptures the fact of Christ's suffering is never referred to as of itself a source of comfort. The Captain of our salvation was made like unto his brethren in order that he might understand the ills of our humanity, and, girded with that knowledge, he comes to the bedside of the sick, saying, "I have suffered," . . . "I am able to succor." He does not come repeating the trite philosophy concerning the universality of pain, but invites us to come unto him and find rest. "My peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." O, beloved, let us not think of the Master other

WHEN the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses. (Matt. viii, 16, 17.)

✠+✠

But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. (Matt. ix, 36.)

✠+✠

When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and said, Where have ye laid him? They say unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept. (John xi, 33-35.)

COMFORT FOR THE SICK.

than as the divine sympathizer with man's weaknesses! That he could censure when necessary, his words to the Pharisees and scribes plainly witness. But he had only tenderness in dealing with the weak, the sorrowing, and the sick. Wherever he walked there sprung up flowers whose heavenly perfume brought cheer and succor to the faint and fallen. And he is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. His promise is, "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you"—to YOU.

To be a perfect Savior, Jesus ran the whole gauntlet of human suffering. He calls upon us to follow his steps. We are commissioned to minister to

FOR even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps. (1 Peter ii, 21.)

✠+✠

Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort: who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. (2 Cor. i, 3, 4.)

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all; to cheer and uplift and comfort the suffering everywhere. But this we can not do unless we be prepared for it as was our Lord. To be sons of consolation we must know the fellowship of our Lord's suffering. We must drink of his cup and be baptized with his baptism. Sickness, then, we may accept as a part of our schooling for the higher life of service.

But sickness has another mission quite as important as that of preparing us to comfort others. Surrounded by a material world, we are in constant danger of becoming materialists unconsciously. Think of the time spent in providing merely for food and clothing. And when these are gained, what

NO MAN can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye can not serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? (Matt. vi, 24-26.)

+

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. (Matt. vi, 33.)

COMFORT FOR THE SICK.

a struggle there is for the materialities! Observe with what pride, almost veneration, the athlete regards his body. That money-getter worships his pile of gold. The agriculturist looks at his fields of grain and his immense stretches of wood and pasture-land with something more than reverence. These men, whether they admit it or not, are materialists, and of the very worst sort. Suddenly they are prostrated by a fever. The strong man loses his faith in the flesh, the miser sees no help in his gold, while the earth earthy has no enchantment for the greedy getter of the soil. Though not all worshipers, we are all subject to the influence, of mammon, and the

THE judgments of the Lord are true and
righteous altogether. More to be desired
are they than gold, yea, than much fine
gold: sweeter also than honey and the
honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy
servant warned. (Psalms xix, 9-11.)

+

Blessed is the man whom thou chasten-
est, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy
law. (Psalms xciv, 12.)

+

In the day of prosperity be joyful,
but in the day of adversity consider.
(Eccles. vii, 14.)

+

I know, O Lord, that thy judgments
are right, and that thou in faithfulness
hast afflicted me. (Psalms cxix, 75.)

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COMFORT FOR THE SICK.

good Father, who knoweth our frame,
shatters our idols, so that, losing faith
in them, we may at last find all our
satisfaction in those things which make
for righteousness and everlasting life.

It is well to learn also that sickness
is God's method of teaching us how to
care for these bodies of ours. The
child learns to keep away from fire
because a burn causes pain. If it
were not for the pain, the mortality of
children, due to accidents from fire,
would be increased a hundred-fold.
But fire is only one of many agencies
of death, which, together, would soon
destroy the whole race were it not for
the suffering they cause. From this
stand-point, pain, instead of being

FOR which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. (2 Cor. iv, 16-18.)

Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. (Heb. xii, 9-11.)

COMFORT FOR THE SICK.


looked upon as an evidence of God's anger, may be regarded as a token of his love. Every disease is eloquent in warning. The typhus, voices, imperfect ventilation and uncleanness, cholera, impure water, and a polluted atmosphere. Though regarded as enemies, these and similar diseases are really angels in disguise.

The Scriptures, however, clearly reveal that God uses sickness for higher ends than to teach us merely the laws of nature. I say merely the laws of nature; for, however great may be our obligation to know God's will concerning the body, that obligation is small in comparison to that of learning his will with respect to the soul. We

AND one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. (Rev. vii, 13-17.)

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may be sure, therefore, that while God would teach us, through sickness, lessons for the body, he is much more concerned in teaching us lessons which shall help us to be more and more like those who, coming up through great tribulation, have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Even the machinations of Satan are used oftentimes of God for our good. The Adversary smote Job with boils "from the sole of his foot unto his crown." But contrary to the expectation of the Tormentor, that which he supposed would work the overthrow of the servant of God, became the means of bringing him nearer his Creator. "I have heard of thee," said

 HAVE learned, in whatsoever state I am,
therewith to be content. (Phil. iv, 11.)

+

Be content with such things as ye
have: for he hath said, I will never
leave thee, nor forsake thee. (Heb.
xiii, 5.)

+

But godliness with contentment is
great gain. For we brought nothing into
this world, and it is certain we can carry
nothing out. And having food and
raiment, let us be therewith content.
(1 Tim. vi, 6-8.)

+

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for
theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matt.
v, 3.)

COMFORT FOR THE SICK.

Job, "by the hearing of the ear, but now"—now that he had passed through the season of physical suffering—"mine eye seeth thee." "And the Lord turned the captivity of Job.

. . . Also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.

. . . So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning." We often wonder why he who loves us so, and who has all power, does not heal us just when we ask him to. That questioning is answered in the experience of St. Paul. He speaks of a "thorn in the flesh," and though he besought the Lord three times that it might be removed, his prayer was unanswered. But he was

AND when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. And prayed unto him: and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God. (2 Chron. xxiii, 12, 13.)

Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word. It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes. (Psalms cxix, 67, 71.)

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. (James i, 2-4.)

COMFORT FOR THE SICK.

assured that grace sufficient would be given him to withstand the trial. "Most gladly, therefore," exclaims the apostle, "will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for WHEN I AM WEAK, THEN AM I STRONG." Those who believe the Christian need never be sick forget that sickness is one of the means God employs for purifying his people, and for leading the sinner to repentance. Countless saints will testify that through the weakness of the flesh they obtained divine strength, and found resting upon them the power of Christ.

If any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. (James v, 14, 15.)

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Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labor, and fellow soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants. For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. (Phil. ii, 25-27.)

✱+✱

Turn again, and tell Hezekiah the captain of my people, Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee. (2 Kings xx, 5.)

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COMFORT FOR THE SICK.

That we may pray for the removal of disease, the Word plainly teaches. "The prayer of faith shall heal the sick." But the "prayer of faith" is characterized by resignation to the will of God. He who said, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt," has by his example taught us to qualify all our asking by humble submission. Our petitions cease to be prayers when they demand an answer other than our Lord chooses to give. So, when we pray for physical healing, we are to ask in faith that it will be done if that is best. When the thorn in the flesh is not removed, we may be sure that his grace will be all-sufficient to bear it. Christ's prayer in the garden was not answered. The

A MERRY heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones. (Prov. xvii, 22.)

But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and TOOK CARE OF HIM. (Luke x, 33, 34.)

But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. (Matt. ix, 12.)

Luke, the beloved physician. (Col. iv, 14.)

COMFORT FOR THE SICK.

cup of suffering was not taken away; but there appeared angels from heaven strengthening him. Another characteristic of the "prayer of faith" is a willingness on the part of him who offers it to do what he can to render extraordinary and miraculous means unnecessary. The Christian prays, "Thy kingdom come," and does all he can to cause it to come, through the means God has already put into his hands. The saint who in poverty says, "Give us this day our daily bread," believes he ought to use every power with which he is endowed to earn his bread. And when, prostrated with disease, we cry to God for help, we still shall not forget to use what has al-

THOU wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore. (Psalms xvi, 11.)

They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light. (Psalms xxxvi, 8, 9.)

Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh. (Luke vi, 21.)

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ready been put within our reach. We shall not despise the ministrations of him who, as a type of the Good Physician, comes to our bedside, a messenger of healing. And when the ordinary means shall fail, then we may ask, in full assurance of faith, the use of the extraordinary, assured that he who made us will re-make us, if thereby we may glorify him better.

O, believe, thou suffering one, that he who knoweth what is best, the best will give. His presence is pledged for evermore. He giveth himself, and, in giving himself, he giveth all. Be patient awhile. The cloud will break in blessings. Remember that it was a cloud which received the Master after

COMFORT FOR THE SICK.

his parting with the disciples. In clouds he hides himself still. Presently they will break, and the Lord will be revealed. Submit your anxious heart and that tired, pain-racked body wholly to him. Out of the furnace-fire of affliction he will bring the pure gold of the kingdom. One day our pains will end. These bodies, subject now to so many limitations, will be sanctified and glorified. "And God shall wipe away all tears; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, NEITHER SHALL THERE BE ANY MORE PAIN."

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