

## **Life in the sick-room. Essays / By an invalid [i.e. H. Martineau].**

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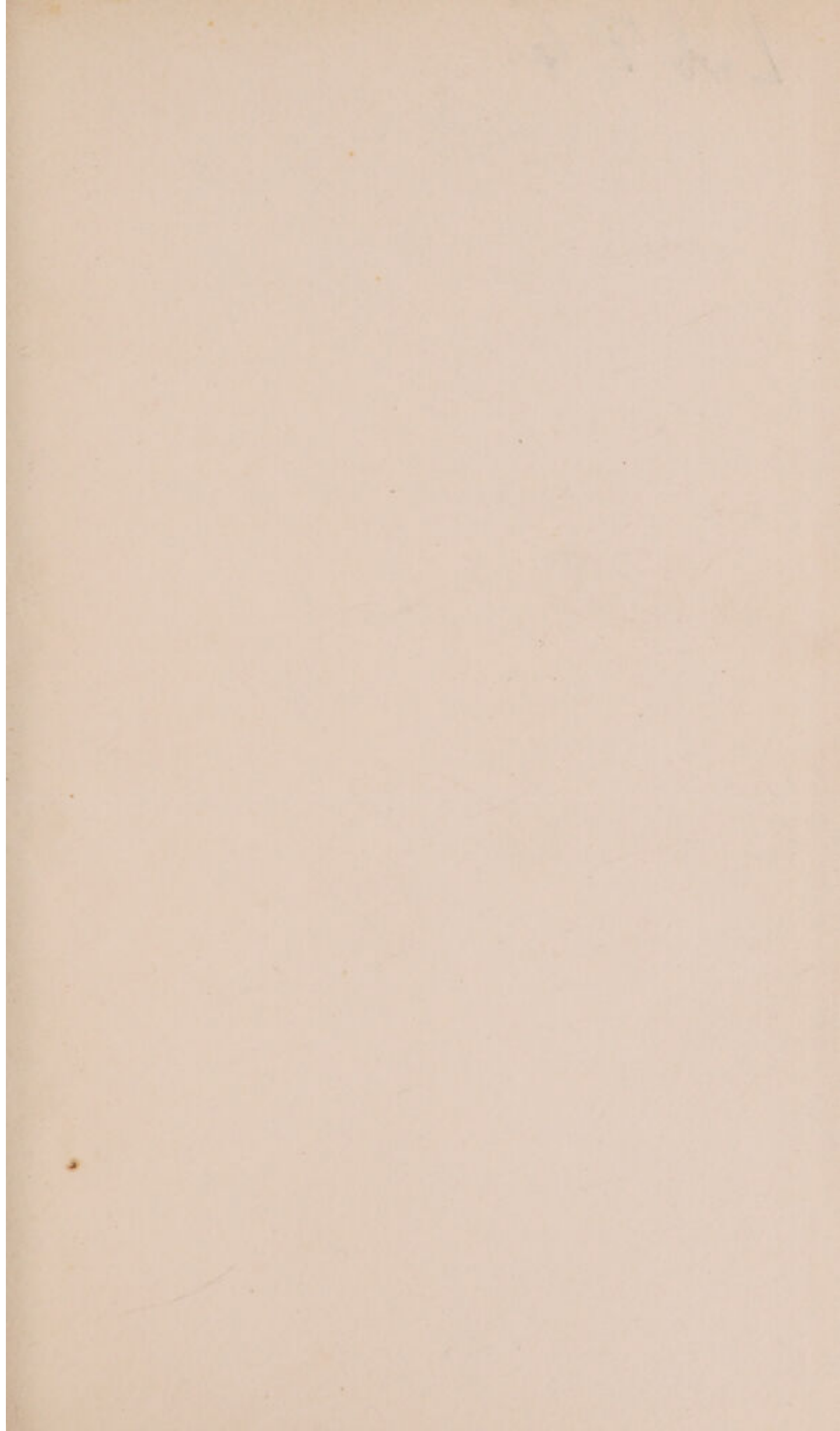
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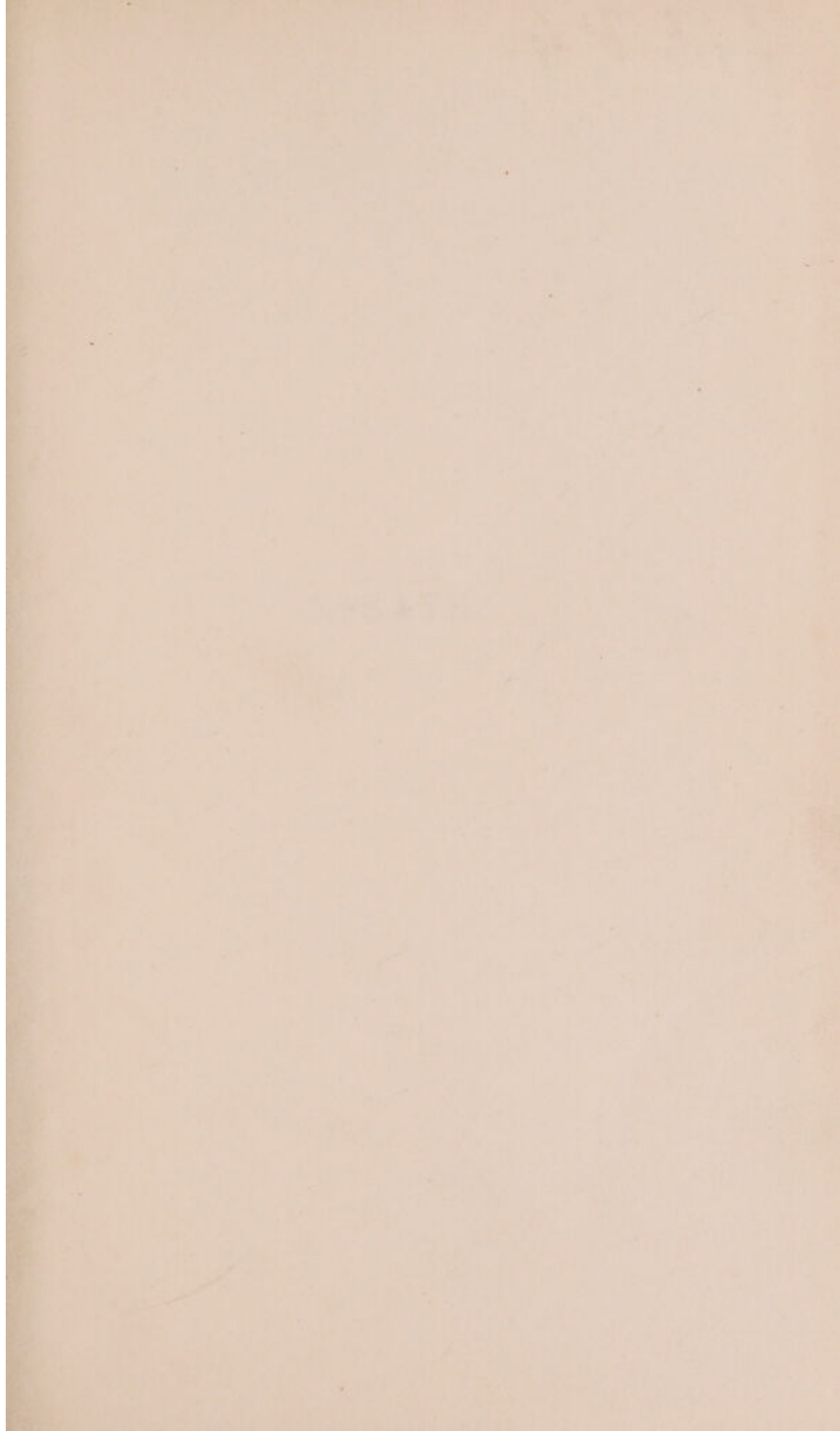
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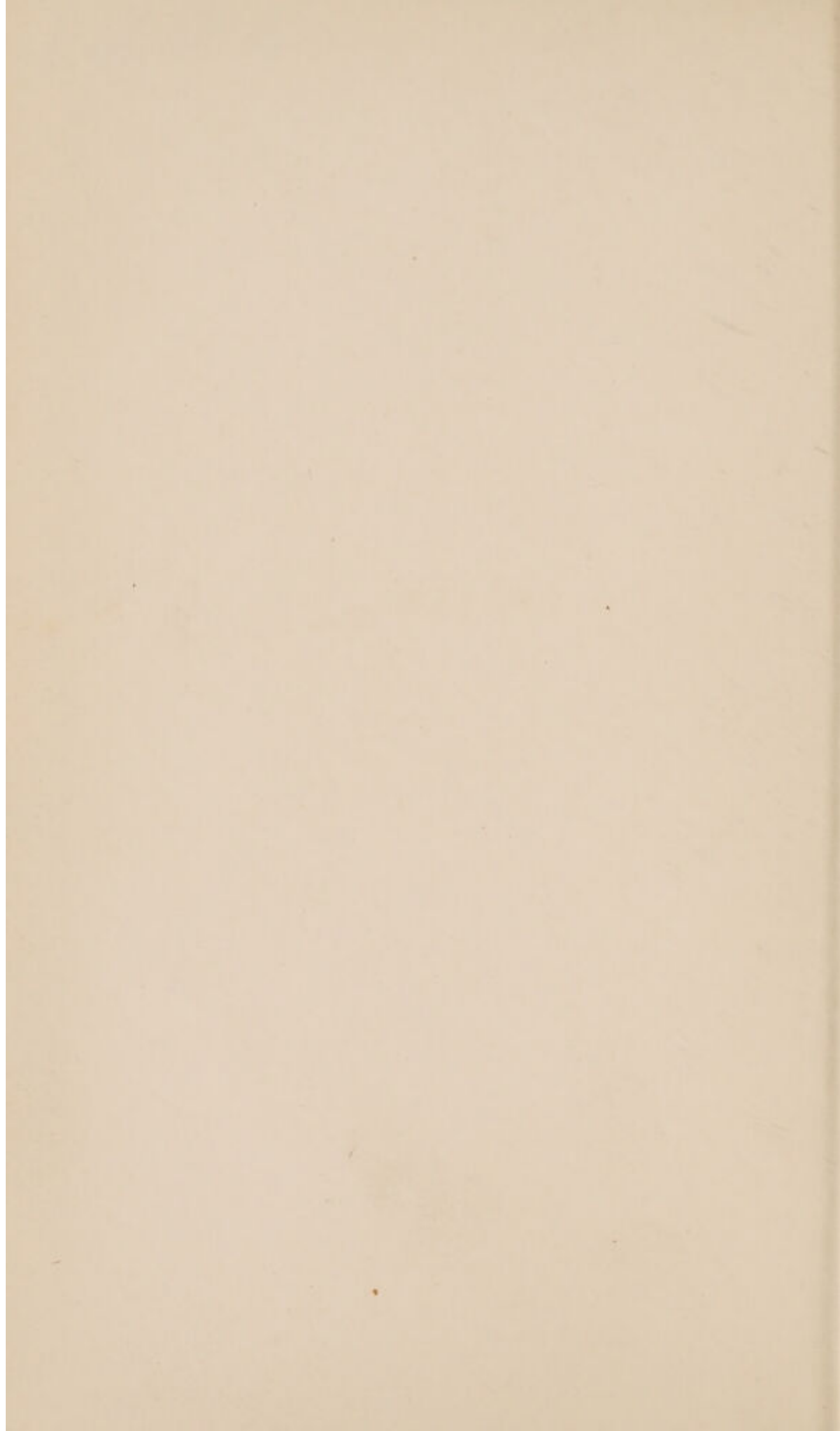
MARTINEAU, H.





Lab P 4.





ESSAYS.

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"Quand on se porte bien, on ne comprend pas comment on pourrait faire si on était malade; et quand on l'est, on prend médecine gaiement: le mal y résout. On n'a plus les passions et les désirs des divertissements et des promenades, que la santé donnait, et qui sont incompatibles avec les nécessités de la maladie. La nature donne alors des passions et des désirs conformes à l'état présent. Ce ne sont que les craintes que nous nous donnons nous-mêmes, et non pas la nature, qui nous troublent; parcequ'elles joignent à l'état où nous sommes les passions de l'état où nous ne sommes pas."—PASCAL.

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LIFE IN THE SICK-ROOM.

ESSAYS.

BY

AN INVALID.

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“ For they breathe truth that breathe their words in pain.”—SHAKSPERE.

“ The saddest birds a season find to sing.”—ROBERT SOUTHWELL.

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TO \_\_\_\_\_

"Passion I see is catching ; for mine eyes,  
Seeing those beads of sorrow stand in thine,  
Began to water."

SHAKSPERE.

"When we our betters see bearing our woes,  
We scarcely think our miseries our foes ;  
Who alone suffers suffers most i' the mind,  
Leaving free things and happy shows behind.  
But then the mind much sufferance doth o'erskip,  
When grief hath mates, and bearing fellowship."

SHAKSPERE.

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As I write this, I cannot but wonder when and how you will read it, and whether it will cause a single throb at the idea that it may be meant for you. You have been in my mind during the passage of almost all the thoughts that will be found in this book. But for your sympathy—confidently reckoned on, though never asked—I do not know that I should have had courage to mark their procession, and record their order. I have felt that if I spoke of these things at all, it must be to some fellow-sufferer—to some one

who had attained these experiences before me or with me; and, having you for my companion throughout, (however unconsciously to yourself), I have uttered many things that I could hardly otherwise have spoken: for one may speak far more freely with a friend, though in the hearing of others, than when singly addressing a number. Most frequently, however, I have forgotten that others could hear, and have conversed as with you alone.

It matters little, in this view, that we have never met—that each of us does not know, except by the eye of the mind, with what outward face the other has encountered the unusual lot appointed to both. While I was as busy as any one on the sunny plain of life, I heard of you laid aside in the shadowy recess where our sunshine of hope and joy could never penetrate to you; and it was with reverence, and not pity, that I inquired of those who could tell whether you had separate lights of heaven, such as there are for



retreats like yours. When I was myself withdrawn into such a recess, if I learned to pity more than before, it was with a still enhanced reverence for your older experience. As the evils of protracted unhealthiness came upon me, one after another, I knew that they had all visited you long ago; and I felt as if they brought me a greeting from you. For me, at least, you have not suffered in vain. Would there might be anything in this volume which might enable you to say the same to me!

At all events, there is something sweet and consoling in the fellowship. Though we would, if we could, endure anything to set the other free—though we would thankfully take upon us any suffering that nature could bear for the thought that no one else was qualified to conceive of our troubles,—yet, as this cannot be, we may make the most of the comfort of our companionship. In our wakeful night seasons, when the healthy and the happy are asleep, we may call to each other

from our retreats, to know each how the other fares ; and, whether we are at the moment dreary or at peace, it may be that there are angels abroad, (perhaps the messengers of our own sympathies), who may bear our mutual greetings, and drop them on their rounds. Often has this been my fancy, when the images close about me have been terrific enough ; and when, in the very throng of these horrors, I have cast about for some charm or talisman wherewith to rid myself of them, and some voice of prayer has presently reached me from a temple on the furthest horizon of my life—or some sweet or triumphant hymn of submission or praise has floated to my spirit's ear from the far shores of my childhood—I have hoped, in the midst of the heaven thus brought down about me, that the same consolations were visiting you, who in the same need would, I knew, make the same appeal.

But there are times when the sense of fellowship is dearer still. You know, doubtless, as well as

I, the emptiness of the consolation when our pitying friends, in all love and sincerity, remind us of what we did by our efforts when we were well and active, and what we are doing still for the world, by preserving a decent quietness in the midst of our troubles. You know, as well as I, how withering would be the sense of our own nothingness, if we tried to take comfort from our own dignity and usefulness. You know, as well as I, how very far we can see from our place on the verge of life, over its expanse, and how ridiculous, if it were not shocking, would be any complacency on the ground of our having followed the instincts of our nature to work, while work was possible,—the issues of such divinely-appointed instrumentality being wholly brought out and directed by Him who framed and actuated us. You know, as I do, how useful it is to human beings to have before their eyes spectacles of all experiences; and we are alike willing, having worked while we could, now to suffer as we may, to help



our kind in another mode. We feel it some little service to be appointed to,—having become accustomed to our footing on the shaking plank over the deep dark river,—to lead on and uphold with a steady hand some who may be appointed to follow, and perhaps to pass us upon it.

But while agreeing in this, our happiest fellowship must be, I think, in seeing, with a clearness we could never otherwise have attained, the vastness and certainty of the progression with which we have so little to do. I do not believe it is possible for persons in health and action to trace, as we can, the agencies for good that are going on in life and the world. Or, if they can, it seems as if the perception were accompanied by a breathless fear,—a dread of being, if not crushed, whirled away somewhere, hurried along to new regions for which they are unprepared, and to which, however good, they would prefer the familiar. You and I, and our fellow-sufferers, see differently, whether or not we see further.

We know and feel, to the very centre of our souls, that there is no hurry, no crushing, no devastation attending Divine processes. While we see the whole system of human life rising and rising into a higher region and a purer light, we perceive that every atom is as much cared for as the whole. While we use our new insight to show us how things are done,—and gravely smile to see that it is by every man's overrating the issues of his immediate pursuit, in order that he may devote all his energies to it, (without which nothing would ever be done,) we smile with another feeling presently, on perceiving how an industry and care from above are compensating to every man his mistake by giving him collateral benefits when he misses the direct good he sought,—by giving him and his helpers a wealth of ideas, as often as their schemes turn out, in their professed objects, profitless. When we see men straining every nerve to reach the tempting apples which are to prove dust and ashes in their jaws,



we see also, by virtue of our position, the flying messenger who is descending with the ambrosia which is to feed their immortal part. We can tell that while revolutions are grandly operating, by which life and the world will in time change their aspect,—while a progress is advancing to which it is now scarcely conceivable that we should ever have dreamed of putting our hands,—there is not one of our passing thoughts that is not ordained,—not a sigh of weariness unheeded,—not an effort of patience that is not met half-way by divine pity,—not a generous emotion of triumph in the world's improvement that is not hallowed by the divine sympathy ever living and breathing round about us. This our peculiar privilege, of seeing and feeling something of the simultaneous vastness and minuteness of providential administration, is one in which we most enjoy sympathy;—at least, I do:—and in this, therefore, do I find your undoubted fellowship most precious.

Here then I end my greeting,—except in as far as the whole book is truly conversation with you. I shall not direct it to your hands, but trust to the most infallible force in the universe,—human sympathy,—to bring these words under your eye. If they should have the virtue to summon thoughts which may, for a single hour, soften your couch, shame and banish your foes of depression and pain, and set your chamber in holy order and something of cheerful adornment, I may have the honour of being your nurse, though I am myself laid low,—though hundreds of miles are between us, and though we can never know one another's face or voice.

Yours,

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## ESSAYS.

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### THE TRANSIENT AND THE PERMANENT IN THE SICK-ROOM.

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“Lasting ! what’s lasting ?

The earth that swims so well, must drown in fire,  
And Time be last to perish at the stake.  
The heavens must parch ; the universe must smoulder.  
Nothing but thoughts can live, and such thoughts only  
As god-like are, making God’s recreation.”

I. KNOWE.

“Affliction worketh patience : and patience, experience ; and experience,  
hope.”

ST. PAUL.

“All places that the eye of Heaven visits  
Are to a wise man ports and happy havens.”

SHAKSPERE.

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THE sick-room becomes the scene of intense convictions ; and among these, none, it seems to me, is more distinct and powerful than that of the permanent nature of good, and the transient nature of evil. At times I could almost believe that long sickness or other trouble is ordained to prove to us this very point—a point worth any costliness of proof.

The truth may pass across the mind of one



who has suffered briefly—may occur to him when glancing back over his experience of a short sharp illness or adversity. He may say to himself that his temporary suffering brought him lasting good, in revealing to him the sympathy of his friends, and the close connexion of human happiness with things unseen ; but this occasional recognition of the truth is a very different thing from the abiding and unspeakably vivid conviction of it, which arises out of a condition of protracted suffering. It may look like a paradox to say that a condition of permanent pain is that which, above all, proves to one the transient nature of pain ; but this is what I do affirm, and can testify.

The apparent contradiction lies in the words “permanent pain”—that condition being made up of a series of pains, each of which is annihilated as it departs ; whereas all real good has an existence beyond the moment, and is indeed indestructible.

A day's illness may teach something of this to a thoughtful mind ; but the most inconsiderate can scarcely fail to learn the lesson, when the proof is drawn out over a succession of months and seasons. With me, it has now included several New

Year's Days; and what have they taught me? What any future New Year's retrospect cannot possibly contradict, and must confirm: though it can scarcely illustrate further what is already as clear as its moon and stars.

During the year looked back upon, all the days, and most hours of the day, have had their portion of pain—usually mild—now and then, for a few marked hours of a few marked weeks, severe and engrossing; while, perhaps, some dozen evenings, and half-dozen mornings, are remembered as being times of almost entire ease. So much for the body. The mind, meantime, though clear and active, has been so far affected by the bodily state as to lose all its gaiety, and, by disuse, almost to forget its sense of enjoyment. During the year, perhaps, there may have been two surprises of light-heartedness, for four hours in June, and two hours and a half in October, with a few single flashes of joy in the intermediate seasons, on the occurrence of some rousing idea, or the revival of some ancient association. Over all the rest has brooded a thick heavy cloud of care, apparently causeless, but not for that the less real. This is the sum of the pains of the year, in relation to



illness. Where are these pains now?—Not only gone, but annihilated. They are destroyed so utterly, that even memory can lay no hold upon them. The fact of their occurrence is all that even memory can preserve. The sensations themselves cannot be retained, nor recalled, nor revived; they are the most absolutely evanescent, the most essentially and completely destructible of all things. Sensations are unimaginable to those who are most familiar with them. Their concomitants may be remembered, and so vividly conceived of, as to excite emotions at a future time: but the sensations themselves cannot be conceived of when absent. This pain, which I feel now as I write, I have felt innumerable times before; yet, accustomed as I am to entertain and manage it, the sensation itself is new every time; and a few hours hence I shall be as unable to represent it to myself as to the healthiest person in the house. Thus are all the pains of the year annihilated. What remains?

All the good remains.

And how is this? whence this wide difference between the good and the evil?

Because the good is indissolubly connected with

ideas—with the unseen realities which are indestructible. This is true, even of those pleasures of sense which of themselves would be as evanescent as bodily pains. The flowers sent to me by kind neighbours have not perished,—that is, the idea and pleasure of them remain, though every blossom was withered months ago. The game and fruit, eaten in their season, remain as comforts and luxuries, preserved in the love that sent them. Every letter and conversation abides,—every new idea is mine for ever; all the knowledge, all the experience of the year, is so much gain. Even the courses of the planets, and the changes of the moon, and the hay-making and harvest, are so much immortal wealth—as real a possession as all the pain of the year was a passing apparition. Yes, even the quick bursts of sunshine are still mine. For one instance, which will well illustrate what I mean, let us look back so far as the Spring, and take one particular night of severe pain, which made all rest impossible. A short intermission, which enabled me to send my servant to rest, having ended in pain, I was unwilling to give further disturbance, and wandered, from mere misery, from my bed and my dim room, which



seemed full of pain, to the next apartment, where some glimmer through the thick window-curtain showed that there was light abroad. Light indeed ! as I found on looking forth. The sun, resting on the edge of the sea, was hidden from me by the walls of the old priory : but a flood of rays poured through the windows of the ruin, and gushed over the waters, strewing them with diamonds, and then across the green down before my windows, gilding its furrows, and then lighting up the yellow sands on the opposite shore of the harbour, while the market-garden below was glittering with dew and busy with early bees and butterflies. Besides these bees and butterflies, nothing seemed stirring, except the earliest riser of the neighbourhood, to whom the garden belongs. At the moment, she was passing down to feed her pigs, and let out her cows ; and her easy pace, arms a-kimbo, and complacent survey of her early greens, presented me with a picture of ease so opposite to my own state, as to impress me ineffaceably. I was suffering too much to enjoy this picture at the moment : but how was it at the end of the year ? The pains of all those hours were annihilated—as completely vanished as if they had



never been ; while the momentary peep behind the window-curtain made me possessor of this radiant picture for evermore. This is an illustration of the universal fact. That brief instant of good has swallowed up long weary hours of pain. An inexperienced observer might, at the moment, have thought the conditions of my gain heavy enough ; but the conditions being not only discharged, but annihilated long ago, and the treasure remaining for ever, would not my best friend congratulate me on that sunrise ? Suppose it shining on, now and for ever, in the souls of a hundred other invalids or mourners, who may have marked it in the same manner, and who shall estimate its glory and its good !

It is clear that the conviction I speak of arises from the supposition—indispensable and, I believe, almost universal,—that pain is the chastisement of a Father ; or, at least, that it is, in some way or other, ordained for, or instrumental to good. The experience of men leaves this belief uncontested, and incontestable. Otherwise, evil and pain would be, in their effects on sufferers, long-lived, if not as immortal as good. If we believed our sufferings to be inflicted by cruelty or malice, our pains

would immediately take a permanent existence by becoming connected with our passions of fear, revenge, &c.; though still—as is known to students of the human soul,—the evil, however long sustained, must be finally absorbed in the good. We, of our age and state of society, however, have to do with none who believe pain to be inflicted by the malignity of a superior being. Those who are not so happy as to recognise in it a mere disguise of blessings otherwise unattainable, receive it, under some of the various theories of necessary imperfection, as something unavoidable, and therefore to be received placidly, if not gratefully. These would admit, as cheerfully as the adorers of a chastening Father, the richness of my wealth, as I lie, on New Year's Eve, surrounded by the treasures of the departing year,—the kindly Year which has utterly destroyed for me so much that is terrible and grievous, while he leaves with me all the new knowledge and power, all the teachings from on high, and the love from far and near, and even the frailest-seeming blossom of pleasure that, in any moment, he has cast into my lap.

Thus has a succession of these friendly years now visited me and gone : and, as far as we can



see, thus will every future one repeat the lesson. If any person disputes, no one can disprove, the result, wrought out, as it is, by natural experience. It is no contradiction, that some are soured by suffering. Their pains, like mine, are gone ; and with them, as with others, it is ideas which remain ; and ideas are essentially good, a part of the indestructible inner life which must, from its very nature, sooner or later part with its evil, through experience of the superabounding good of the universe. If one so soured by pain dies in this mood, the ideal part of him is that which remains to be carried into a fresh scene, where the mood cannot be fed by the experience which nourished it here. If he lives long enough to change his mood, there is every probability that the benignant influences which are perpetually at work throughout life and nature will dissolve and disperse his troubles, as the eastern lights, the breath of morning and the chirp of birds, steal in upon the senses of the troubled sleeper, and thence possessing themselves of his reason, convince him that the miseries of the night season were but a dream.

True and consoling as it may be for him, and for those about him, to find thus that " trouble may

endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning," they have not fully learned the lessons of the sick-room if they are not aware that, while the troubles of that night season are thus sure to pass away, its product of thoughts and experiences must endure, till the stars which looked down upon the scene have dissolved in their courses. The constellations formed in the human soul, out of the chaos of pain, must have a duration compared with which, those of the firmament are but as the sparkles showered over the sea by the rising sun. To one still in this chaos,—if he do but see the creative process advancing,—it can be no reasonable matter of complaint, that his course is laid the while through such a region ; and he will feel almost ashamed of even the most passing anxiety as to how soon he may be permitted to emerge.



## SYMPATHY TO THE INVALID.

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"The essence of friendship is entireness ; a total magnanimity and trust. It must not surmise or provide for infirmity. It treats its object as a god, that it may deify both."  
EMERSON.

"Our hands in one, we will not shrink  
From life's severest due :—  
Our hands in one, we will not blink  
The terrible and true."

MILNES.

---

IF all sorrow teaches us that nothing is more universal than sympathy, long and irremediable sickness proves plainly, that nothing is more various than its kinds and degrees ; or, it may be, than the manifestations of the sympathetic grief which is shared by all. In a sharp sickness of a few days or weeks, all good and kind people act and speak much alike ; are busy and ingenious in hastening the recovery, and providing relief meantime. It is when death is not to be looked for, nor yet health, that the test is applied ; that, on either hand, the genius and the awkwardness of consolation present themselves, with a vast gradation between these extremes. It is easy and pleasant to be grateful for all, and to appreciate

the love and pity which inspire them ; but it is impossible to relish all equally, or to give the same admiration to that which flows forth fully and freely, and that sympathy which is suppressed, restricted, or in any way changed before it reaches its object.

O ! what a heavenly solace to the soul is free sympathy in its hour of need ! There is but one that can vie with it ; and that one is, in truth, an enhancement of the same emotions. Communion with

“ Mercy, carried infinite degrees  
Beyond the tenderness of human hearts,”

is, indeed, the supreme, incommunicable delight which must be only referred to, because no sense of it can be conveyed by language ; but, because it is of kindred nature, though separated by immeasurable distance, the solace of human sympathy ranks next to this. What a springing of the heart, like that on the discovery of a new truth, or entrance on a new enterprise in youth, attends the revelation to a sufferer of some stroke of genius in the consolations of one of the many who grieve for his affliction !

Many give their best thoughts to provide



alleviations—whether in the form of medicines, or dainties for the mind or palate, for the eye or ear ; and sweet is the enjoyment of the kindness which provides, whether the luxuries themselves can be relished or not. Some kind soul does a better service still, by affording opportunity for the sufferer to minister to other afflicted ones ; to relieve some distress of poverty, or other want. This is sweet ; but there are times when the personal trial needs some solace nearer and more direct than this. Then is the hour when the pain of sympathy in the hearts of friends impels them to cast about for relief, and tempts them to speak of hope to the sufferer who has no hope, or none compatible with the kind of consolation they attempt. Going back to the days when I, myself, was the sympathiser, I remember how strong is the temptation to imagine, and to assure the sick one, that his pain will not last ; that the time will come when he will be well again ; that he is already better ; or, if it be impossible to say that, that he will get used to his affliction, and find it more endurable. How was it that I did not see that such offers of consolation must be purely irritating to one who was not feeling better, nor

believing that he should ever be better, nor in a state to be cheered by any speculation as to whether his pain would, or would not become more endurable with time! Exactly in proportion to the zeal with which such considerations were pressed, must have been the sufferer's clearness of perception of the disguised selfishness which dictated the topics and the words. I was (as I half suspected at the time, from my sense of restraint and uneasiness,) trying to console myself, and not my friend; indulging my own cowardice, my own shrinking from a painful truth, at the expense of the feelings of the sufferer for whom my heart was aching. I, who had no genius for consolation, at least in cases of illness, have been silently corrected by the benignest of reproofs,—by the experience of this genius in my own season of infirmity.

The manifestations of sympathetic feeling are as various as of other feelings; but the differences are marked by those whom they concern, with a keenness proportioned to the hunger of their heart. The sick man has even sometimes to assure himself of the grief of his friends, by their silence to him on circumstances which he cannot but feel most important. Their letters, extending over months



and years, perhaps contain no mention of his trial, no reference to his condition, not a line which will show to his executors that the years over which they spread were years of illness. Though he can account for this suppression in the very love of his friends, yet it brings no particular consolation to him. Others, perhaps, administer praise ;—praise, which is the last thing a humbled sufferer can appropriate ;—praise of his patience or fortitude, which perhaps arrives at the moment when his resolution has wholly given way, and tears may be streaming from his eyes, and exclamations of anguish bursting from his lips. Such consolations require forbearance, however it may be mingled with gratitude. Far different was my emotion, when one said to me, with a face like the face of an angel, “ Why should we be bent upon your being better, and make up a bright prospect for you ? I see no brightness in it ; and the time seems past for expecting you ever to be well.” How my spirits rose in a moment at this recognition of the truth !

And again—when I was weakly dwelling on a consideration which troubled me much for some time, that many of my friends gave me credit for far severer pain than I was enduring, and that I

thus felt myself a sort of impostor, encroaching unwarrantably on their sympathies, "O! never mind!" was the reply. "That may be more than balanced hereafter. You will suffer more, with time—or you will seem to yourself to suffer more; and then you will have less sympathy. We grow tired of despairing, and think less and less of such cases, whether reasonably or not; and you may have less sympathy when you need it more. Meantime, you are not answerable for what your friends feel; and it is good for them—natural and right—whether you think it accurate or not."

These words put a new heart into me, dismissed my scruples about the over-wealth of the present hour, and strengthened my soul for future need—the hour of which has not, however, yet arrived. It is a comfortable season, if it may but last, when one's friends have ceased to hope unreasonably, and not "grown tired of despairing."

Another friend, endowed both by nature and experience with the power I speak of, gave me strength for months—for my whole probation—by a brave utterance of one word, "Yes." In answer to a hoping consoler, I told a truth of fact which sounded dismal, though because it was fact I spoke



it in no dismal mood ; and the genius at my side, by a confirmatory " Yes," opened to my view a whole world of aid in prospect from a soul so penetrating and so true.

I know it is pleaded that there are sufferers not strong enough to bear the truth—who like to be soothed with hopes, well or ill-grounded ; who find immediate comfort in being told that they will throw off their pain and be at ease. If there be such, I have never known them ; and I doubt their existence. I believe that the tendency to make the worst of bodily complaints, on which so many satires (some just) are founded, is much aggravated, if not generally caused, by the tendency in the healthy and happy to disallow pain and a sad prospect. Children, weak and unpractised sufferers as they are, are found not to be consolable in the manner proposed. We all know the story of the little boy in the street, crying from the smart of a fall, who, when assured by a good-natured passenger that he should not cry, because he would be well to-morrow, answered, " Then I won't cry to-morrow."

The weakest sufferers are precisely those who are least able to appropriate the future and its good



things. If this be true of the weak, and if the strong find it irritating to be medicined with soft fictions, or presented with anything but sound truth, the popular method of consolation appears to be excluded altogether. If my own life were to be lived over again, I should, from the strength of this conviction, convert most of its words of intended consolation into a far more consolatory condolence. Never again should the suffering spirit turn from me, as I fear it has often done—if too gentle to be irritated—yet sickening at hollow words of promise, when instant fellow-feeling was what was needed; and mournfully thinking, though too kind to say it, “‘the heart knoweth its own bitterness,’ and mine must endure alone.” The fair retribution has not followed, for never thus have I been left to feel.

I am here reminded of a sort of consolation, often offered, which I do not at all understand. I do not quarrel with it, however, for it may suit others less insensible to its claims. Sequestered sufferers, whose term of activity is over, and who apparently have only to endure as they may, and learn and enjoy what they can, till they receive their summons to enter on a new career, are

referred for solace to their consciences—to their consciousness of services rendered to society, and duty done in active days. I strongly doubt whether Conscience was ever appointed to the function of Consoler. I more than doubt ; I disbelieve it. According to my own experience, the utmost enjoyment that conscience is capable of is a negative state, that of ease. Its power of suffering is strong ; and its natural and best condition I take to be one of simple ease ; but for enjoyment and consolation, I believe we must look to other powers and susceptibilities of our nature.

It is inconceivable to me that our moral sense can ever be gratified by anything in our own moral state. It must be more offended by our own sins and weaknesses than by all the other sin and weakness in the world, in proportion as the evil is more profoundly known to it, and more nakedly disgusting, because it is stripped of the allowances and palliations which are admissible in all other cases. And this disgust is not compensated for by a corresponding satisfaction in our own good ; for the very best good we can ever recognise in ourselves falls so far short of our own conceptions, so fails to satisfy the requisitions of the moral



sense, that it can afford no gratification. A conscience which can enjoy itself on its own resources, must be of a very low degree—I should say of a spurious nature. In the highest state of health that I can conceive of—health spiritual and physical—I believe the function of the moral sense to be to delight itself in good wherever it is to be found, (and no wise person will look for it within himself,) to keep watch and ward against evil, and to cherish lowliness at home by its incessant consciousness of the imperfection there; an imperfection so keenly felt by an enlightened and accurate conscience, as to cause a wholesome going abroad for interests and gratifications, so that ease may be found in self-forgetfulness. The necessity which so many feel of a relief from their disappointed conscience—of adventitious merits on which to rely in the failure of their own—of a saving interposition between their own imperfections and the requisitions of God and duty; this prevalent need is an unanswerable rebuke to the presumption which talks of “the happiness of an approving conscience.” If it is thus in the season of vigour, health, and self-command, how inexpressibly absurd is the mistake of bringing



such a topic as consolation to the sick and sequestered!—to the sick, whose whole heart is faint, and the mental frame disordered, more or less, in proportion as the body is jaded and the nerves unstrung; and to the sequestered, who perforce devour their own hearts, and find them the bitterest food! Why, one of the most painful trials of long sickness and seclusion is, that all old pains, all past moral sufferings, are renewed and magnified; that in sleepless nights, and especially on waking in the morning, every old sin and folly, and even the most trifling error, rises up anew, however long ago repented of and forgiven, and, in the activity of ordinary life, forgotten. Any sort of ghost is more easily laid than this kind. Though their “brains were out” long years ago, they continue to come—they present themselves in defiance of all—even the most sacred, exorcisms; so that it becomes one of the duties of the sick to bear their presence with composure, and cease to struggle for their exclusion. In the midst of this experience, to have one’s friends come, and desire one to look back upon one’s past life for complacency and self-gratulation, in order to assure one’s self how well one has used one’s powers and oppor-

tunities—how much one has done for society—how lofty and honourable a life one has led—and so forth,—O ! what words can express the absurdity ! If the consoler could but see the invisible array which comes thronging into the sick-room from the deep regions of the past, brought by every sound of nature without, by every movement of the spirit within ; the pale lips of dead friends whispering one's hard or careless words, spoken in childhood or youth—the upbraiding gaze of duties slighted and opportunities neglected—the horrible apparition of old selfishness and pusillanimities—the disgusting foolery of idiotic vanities ; if the consoler could catch a momentary glimpse of this phantasmagoria of the sick-room, he would turn with fear and loathing from the past, and shudder, while the inured invalid smiles, at such a choice of topics for solace.

Then it might become the turn of the invalid to console—to explain how these are but phantoms—how solace does abound, though it comes from every region rather than the kingdom of conscience—and how, while the past is dry and dreary enough, there are streams descending from the heaven-bright mountain-tops of the future, for



ever flowing down to our retreat, pure enough for the most fastidious longing, abundant enough for the thirstiest soul. The consoler may then learn for life how easily all personal complacencies may be dispensed with, while the sufferer can tell of a true "refuge and strength," and "present help," and of this "river that gladdens the city of God," and flows to meet us as we journey towards it.

But, the anxious consoler may say, Is it right so to banish these complacencies? If you really have served the world, however imperfectly in your own eyes—if you have sown thoughts in minds, and called forth affections in hearts—ought you to deny the facts, or that they are good?

By no means. If you assure me of these things as facts, you bring me good news. But I should feel it as good news—perhaps better—if the service had been rendered by anybody else; for the simple reason that the good would then be to me unmixed, which now it is not, nor can ever be. Call upon me, whenever you will, to rejoice that men have gained an idea—that the aged or children have been amused or strengthened—or that society has been relieved from an abuse, by any one's means. Rouse me from the depression



of pain, wake me up from sleep for the better refreshment of this news, and I will rejoice ; but do not think to enhance your tidings by telling me that these things are my doing. The only effect of that is, to remind me how much better the service might have been done. Surely we both believe that all truth and goodness are destined to arise sooner or later among men. To be visited with new or good ideas is a blessing : to be appointed to communicate them is an honour : but these blessings and honours are a ground for personal humility, not complacency. It is to me impossible to connect the idea of merit with any such destiny. There is nothing we have so little hand in as our own ideas ; there is no occupation less voluntary than that of uttering them. And so will every servant of his race say of his own species of service. He will rejoice that something new and good is acquired or attained by his race ; and he must naturally be thankful for the honour and enjoyment appointed to him as the medium : but he can find no ground for personal complacency in the matter. He will be utterly careless whether men know, a hundred years hence, through whom they received the benefit, or whether his name has been

for ninety years lost to all but his intimate friends. If he were offered the choice between this reputation and the fact of his having conquered one unkind emotion, or made one single effort of endurance, he would eagerly prefer the secret genuine good to the blazoned apparent one.

“There is something extremely absurd and ridiculous,” says the holy Hartley, “in supposing a person to be perpetually feasting his own mind with, and dwelling upon, the praises that already are, or which he hopes will hereafter be, given to him. And yet, unless a man does this (which besides would evidently incapacitate him for deserving or obtaining praise), how can he fill up a thousandth part of his time with the pleasures of ambition?” Even more absurd is to me the image of a lonely sufferer, trying not only to fill up his time, but to soothe his pains of body, and calm his anguish of spirit, by drawing delight from the remembrance of his own little contrivings and doings in the world. I would recommend, in preference, the project of drawing sunbeams from cucumbers, as a solace on the rack.

If it is asked, after all this, “who can console? how is it possible to please and soothe the sufferer?”



I answer, that nothing is easier—nothing is more common—nothing more natural to simple-minded people. Never creature had more title than I to speak confidently of this, from experience which melts my heart day by day. “Speaking the truth in love,” is the way. One who does this cannot but be an angel of consolation. Everything but truth becomes loathed in a sick-room. The restless can repose on nothing but this: the sharpened intellectual appetite can be satisfied with nothing less substantial; the susceptible spiritual taste can be gratified with nothing less genuine, noble, and fair.

Then the question arises, what sort of truth? Why, that which is appropriate to the one who administers. To each a separate gift may be appointed. Only let all avoid every shadow of falsehood. Let the nurse avow that the medicine is nauseous. Let the physician declare that the treatment will be painful. Let sister, or brother, or friend, tell me that I must never look to be well. When the time approaches that I am to die, let me be told that I am to die, and when. If I encroach thoughtlessly on the time or strength of those about me, let me be reminded; if selfishly,



let me be remonstrated with. Thus to speak the truth in love is in the power of all. Higher service is a talent in the hands of those who have a genius for sympathy—a genius less rare, thank God! than other kinds.

The archangel of consolation is the friend who, at a fitting moment, reminds me of my high calling. Not the clergyman, making his stated visit for the purpose; not the zealous watcher for souls, who fears for mine on the ground of difference of doctrine; not the meddler, who takes charge of my spiritual relations whether I will or no: none such are, by virtue of these offices, effectual consolers. But if the friend of my brighter days—with whom I have travelled, sung, danced, consulted about my work, enjoyed books and society—the friend, now far off, busy in robust health of body and spirit, sends me a missive which says, “ You languish—you are sick at heart. But put this sickness from your heart, and your pains under your feet. You have known before that there is a divine joy in endurance. Prove it now. Lift up your head amidst your lot, and wait the issue—not submissively, but heroically. Live out your season, not wistfully looking out for hope, or shrinking from fear :

but serenely and immoveably (because in full understanding with God), ENDURE;" if such an appeal comes, and at any hour (for there is no hour of sickness with which it is not congenial), what an influx of life does it bring! What a heavenly day, week, year, succeeds! How the crippled spirit leaps up at the miraculous touch, and springs on its way, praising God in his very temple! And again, when a thoughtful, conscientious spirit, guided by an analytical intellect, utters from a distance, not as an appeal, but as in soliloquy—"With an eternity before us, it cannot matter much, if we would but consider it, whether we are laid aside for such or such a length of time; whether we can be busy for others at this moment, or must wait so many months or years: and as for ourselves, how can we tell but that we shall find the experience we are gaining worth any cost of suffering?" When such a thought comes under my eye, as if I overheard some spirit in the night-wind communing with itself, I feel a strong and kindly hand take my heart and steep it in patience. Again, a kind visitor, eloquent by using few words or none on matters nearest at heart, takes down from my shelves a Fenelon or other quietist, and



with silent finger points to the saying, inexhaustible in truth, that it is what we *are* that matters—not what we *do* ; and here, in one moment, do I find a boundless career opened to me within the four walls of my room. Again—a tender spirit, anxious under responsibility, says “ If you could but fully feel, as you will one day feel, the privilege of having your life and lot settled for you—your spirit free, your mind at leisure—no hurry, no conflicts nor misgivings about duty—you would easily conceive that there are some who would gladly exchange with you, and pour into your lap willingly all the good things that you seem to be without. I dare say we are very philosophical for you about your sufferings; but where I do sympathise with you, is in regard to this clearness and settledness of your life’s duty and affairs.” To this again, my whole being cries “ amen ! ” Here are a few of the heavenly messages which have come to me through human hearts. When below these are ranged the innumerable ministrations of help, of smiles and tears, of solid comforts and beguiling luxuries, it does indeed seem impossible that I should be in any degree dubious or hard to please in the contemplation and reception of human



sympathy. What I have said of its most perfect forms, I have said from my own knowledge.

Under this head of sympathy occurs the important practical consideration, what should be the arrangements of a permanent invalid, in regard to companionship?

In most cases, this is no matter of choice, but a point settled by domestic circumstances; where it is not, however, I cannot but wish that more consideration was given to the comfort of being alone in illness. This is so far from being understood, that, though the cases are numerous of sufferers who prefer, and earnestly endeavour to procure solitude, they are, if not resisted, wondered at, and humoured for a supposed peculiarity, rather than seen to be reasonable; whereas, if they are listened to as the best judges of their own comforts, it may be found that they have reason on their side.

In a house full of relations, it may be unnatural for an invalid to pass many hours alone; but where, as is the case with numbers who belong to the middle and working classes of society, all the other members of the family have occupations

and duties—regular business in life—without the charge of the invalid, it does appear to me, and is felt by me through experience, to be incomparably the happiest plan for the sick one to live alone. By experience it is found to be not only expedient, but important in regard to happiness. In pictures of the sick-room, drawn by those who are at ease and happy, the group is always of the sufferer supported and soothed by some loving hand and tender voice, and every pain shared by sympathy. This may be an approach to truth in the case of short sharp illness, where the sufferer is taken by surprise, and has his whole lesson to learn; but a very different account would often be given by an invalid whose burden is for life, and who has learned the truths of the condition. We, of that class, find it best and happiest to admit our friends only in our easiest hours, when we can enjoy their society, and feel ourselves least of a burden; and it is indispensable to our peace of mind to be alone when in pain. Where welfare of body is out of the question, peace of mind becomes an object of supreme importance; and this is unattainable when we see any whom we love suffering, in our sufferings, even more than we



do: or when we know that we have been the means of turning any one's day of ease and pleasure into sorrow. The experience of years qualifies me to speak about this; and I declare that I know of no comfort, at the end of a day of suffering, comparable to that of feeling that, however it may have been with one's self, no one else has suffered,—that one's own fogs have dimmed nobody's sunshine: and when this grows to be the nightly comfort of weeks, months, and years, it becomes the most valuable element in the peace of the sufferer, and lightens his whole lot. If not in the midst of pain, he feels in prospect of it, and after it, that it really matters very little whether and how much he suffers, if nobody else is pained by it. It becomes a habit, from the recurrence of this feeling, to write letters in one's best mood; to give an account of one's self in one's best hours; to present one's most cheerful aspect abroad, and keep one's miseries close at home, under lock and key.

The objection commonly brought to this system is, that it is injurious to one's loving and anxious friends. But I do not find it so. So loving and anxious are my friends, that they do not need the



wretched stimulus of seeing me suffer. All that can be done for me is done ; and it would be no consolation, but a great aggravation to me, that they should suffer gratuitously. Their general love, and care and concern for me, are fully satisfying to me ; and I know that I have only to call and they will come. But I feel with inexpressible comfort what a difference there is between their general concern for my state, and the pain of days, now separately spent by them in ease and joy, which would be more dreary to them than to me, if I let them share my dreariness. A trifling incident, which occurred the other day, gave me strong satisfaction, as proving that where my method can be made a system, it works well,—promoting the cheerfulness, without impairing the sympathies, of even the youngest of those for whom I have a welcome only at certain seasons. Two little friends were with me—one greatly admiring various luxuries about me, and thence proceeding to reckon up a large amount of privileges and enjoyments in my possession and prospect, when his companion said, with a sigh and tenderness of tone, musical to my soul, “ Ah! but then, there is the unhealthiness! that spoils every-

thing!" To which the other mournfully assented. What more could these children know by having their hearts wounded by the spectacle of suffering! And if they may be spared the pain, larger minds and more ripened hearts must require it even less.

I need not say that this plan of solitude in pain supposes sufficient and kindly attendance; but, for a permanence, (though I know it to be otherwise in short illnesses,) there is no attendance to be compared with that of a servant. In as far as the help is mechanical, it tends to habituate the sufferer to his lot, and the relation is sustained with the least expenditure of painful feeling on both sides,—with the least anxiety, as well as pain of sympathy.

There is sufficient kindliness excited in the attendant by the appeal to her feelings, while there is no call for the agony which a congenial friend must sustain; and, on the other side, there is no overwhelming sense of obligation to the nurse, but a satisfactory consciousness of, at least, partial requital. It is no small item in the account of this method, that the promotion of the happiness of the attendant is a cheerful, natural, and salutary pur-



suit to the invalid ; a daily duty imposed when so many others are withdrawn ; a fragment of beneficent power left in the scene of its wreck. To dignify her by putting one's self under express and frequent obligations to her,—to rejoice her by enjoying relief or pleasure devised by her ingenuity,—to spare her health, promote her little fortunes, encourage her best tastes and aspirations, and draw out for her, as well as for one's self, the lessons of the sick-room ; to study these things befits the mutual relation, and cheers the life of the sufferer, while the connexion is not so close as to involve the severer pains of sympathy.

In a sick-room, where health is never again to enter, it is well and easily understood that commemorative seasons, anniversaries, &c., are far from being, as elsewhere, among the gayest. In truth, they are often mournful enough ; but I am confident that they are most cheerily spent alone. No heart leal to its kind can bear to let them pass unnoticed. It is an intolerable selfishness to abolish them, as far as in one lies, because they have ceased to gladden us ; this would be as paltry as to turn one's back on an old companion, formerly all merriment and smiles, because he comes



to us in mourning or in tears ; or, let us say, abstracted and thoughtful. But it does not succeed to make small attempts to keep the day, for the sake of one or two companions, putting up Christmas holly over the fire-place, where there is only one to sit, and having Christmas fare brought to the couch, to be sent away again. But when one is alone, the matter is very different, and becomes far gayer. There is nothing, then, to prevent my being in the world again for the day ; no human presence to chain me to my prison. When my servant is dismissed to make merry with the rest, and I am alone with my holly sprigs and the memories of old years, I can flit at will among the family groups that I see gathered round many fire-sides. If the morning is sunny, I actually see, with my telescope, the gay crowds that throng the opposite shore after church ; and the sight revives the dimmed image of crowded streets, and brings back to my ear the almost forgotten sound of “ the church-going bell.” When it grows dark, and my lamp burns so steadily as to give of itself a deep impression of stillness ; when there is no sound but of the cinder dropping on the hearth, or of the turning of the leaf as I read or write, there is

something of a holiday feeling in pausing to view and listen to what is going on in all the houses where one has an interest. By means of that inimitable telescope we carry about in us, (which acts as well in the pitch-dark night as at noon, and defies distance and house-walls,) I see in turn a Christmas tree, with its tapers glittering in a room full of young eyes, or the games and the dance, or the cozy little party of elderly folk round the fire or the tea-table ; and I hear, not the actual jokes, but the laughter, and “ the sough of words without the sense,” and can catch at least the soul of the merriment. If I am at ease, I am verily among them : if not, I am thankful not to be there ; and, at all events have, from life-long association, caught so much of the contagious spirit of sociability, that, when midnight comes, I lie down with an impression of its having been an extraordinary day,—a social one, though, (as these are the days when one is sure *not* to see one’s doctor,) the face of my maid is, in reality, the only one that has met my eyes. O yes ! on these marked days, however it may be on ordinary ones, our friends may take our word for it that we are most cheery alone.

There is one day of the year of which every-



body will believe this,—one's birthday. Regarded as a birthday usually and naturally is, in ordinary circumstances, there must be something melancholy in it when attempted to be kept in the sick-room of a permanent invalid: but this melancholy is lost when one is alone. It is true, one's mind goes back to the festivals of the day in one's childhood, and to the mantling feelings of one's youth, when each birthday brought us a step further into the world which lay in its gay charms all before us; and we find the gray hairs and thin hands of to-day form an ugly contrast with the images conjured up. But, in another view,—a view which can be enjoyed only in silence and alone,—what a sanctity belongs to these gray hairs and other tokens of decay! They and the day are each tokens (how dear!) seals (how distinct!) of promise of our selection for a not distant admittance to a station whence we may review life and the world to better advantage than even now. If, with every year of contemplation, the world appears a more astonishing fact, and life a more noble mystery, we cannot but be reanimated by the recurrence of every birthday which draws us up higher into the region of contemplation, and



nearer to the gate within which lies the disclosure of all mysteries which worthily occupy us now, and doubtless a new series of others adapted to our then ennobled powers. This is a birthday experience which it requires leisure and solitude fully to appropriate: and it yet leaves liberty for the human sympathies which belong to the season. Post time is looked to for its sure freight of love and pity and good wishes from a few—or not a few—whose affections keep them even more on the watch than ourselves for one's own holy day. Letters are one's best company on that day,—and best if they are one's only company.

There is one point on which I can speak only as every one may,—from observation and thought,—but on which I have a very decided impression, notwithstanding;—as to the conduct which would be dictated by the truest sympathy in a case which not unfrequently occurs. I have known instances of persons, most benevolent and thoughtless of themselves through life, becoming *exigeans* and oppressive in their last days, merely through want of information as to what they are doing. One attendant is usually preferred to all others by a dying person: and I have seen the favourite nurse

worn out by the incessant service required day and night by the sufferer, in ignorance how time passes,—even in mistake of the night for the day. I have known the most devoted and benevolent of women call up her young nurse from a snatch of sleep at two in the morning to read aloud, when she had been reading aloud for six or seven hours of the preceding day. I have known a kind-hearted and self-denying man require of two or three members of his family to sit and talk and be merry in his chamber, two or three hours after midnight:—and both for want of a mere intimation that it was night, and time for the nurse's rest. How it makes one shudder to think of this being one's own case! The passing doubt whether one can trust one's friends, when the season comes, to save one from such tyrannical mistakes, is a doubt sickening to the heart. Nothing is clearer *now*, when we are in full possession of ourselves, than that the most sympathising friend is one who cherishes our amiability and reasonableness to the last,—who preserves our perfect understanding with those about us through all dimness of the eyes and wandering of the brain. If I could not trust my friends to save me from



involuntary encroachment at the last, I had rather scoop myself a hole in the sand of the desert, and die alone, than be tended by the gentlest hands, and soothed by the most loving voices in the choicest chamber.

It is doubtless easiest to comply at the moment of such exactions, at any sacrifice of subsequent health and nerve : but it should be remembered that the sacrifice is not of health alone. The posthumous love must suffer ;—or if not the love, the respect for the departed. It is impossible to love one who appears in a selfish aspect,—though it be the merest mask, most briefly worn,—so well as the countenance that never concealed its benevolence for a moment. Let then the timely thought of the future,—a provident care for the memory of the dying friend, suggest the easy prudence which may obviate encroachment. Let the bewildered sufferer be frequently and cheerfully told the hour,—and informed that such an one is going to rest, to be replaced by another for so many hours. A little forethought and resource may generally prevent the great evil I speak of : and if not, true sympathy requires that there should be a cheerful word of remonstrance—or



let us call it rectification. So may it be with me, if so lingering a departure be appointed ! Thus would every one say beforehand ; and it seems to me a sin against every one's moral rights not to take him at his word.

## NATURE TO THE INVALID.

"O mighty love! Man is one world and hath  
Another to attend him!" GEORGE HERBERT.

"Let us find room for this great guest in our small houses." EMERSON.

"Shut not so soon! The dull-eyed night  
Has not as yet begun  
To make a seizure of the light,  
Or to seal up the sun." HERRICK.

WHEN an invalid is under sentence of disease for life, it becomes a duty of first-rate importance to select a proper place of abode. This is often overlooked; and a sick prisoner goes on to live where he lived before, for no other reason than because he lived there before. Many a sufferer languishes amidst street noises, or passes year after year in a room whose windows command dead walls, or paved courts, or some such objects; so that he sees nothing of Nature but such sky and stars as show themselves above the chimney-tops. I remember the heart-ache it gave me to see a youth, confined to a recumbent posture for two or three years, lying in a room whence he could see nothing, and dependent therefore on

the cage of birds by his bed-side, and the flowers his friends sent him, for the only notices of Nature that reached him, except the summer's heat and winter's cold. There was no sufficient reason why he should not have been placed where he could overlook fields, or even the sea.

If a healthy man, entering upon a temporary imprisonment, hangs his walls with a paper covered with roses, and every one sympathises in this forethought for his mind's health, much more should the invalid, (who, though he must be a prisoner, has yet liberty of choice where his prison shall be,) provide for sustaining and improving his attachment to Nature, and for beguiling his sufferings, by the unequalled refreshments she affords. He will be wise to sacrifice indolence, habit, money and convenience, at the outset, to place himself where he can command the widest or the most beautiful view that can be had without sacrificing advantages more essential still. There are few things more essential still: but there are some;—such as medical attendance, and a command of the ordinary conveniences of life.

What is the best kind of view for a sick pri-



soner's windows to command? I have chosen the sea, and am satisfied with my choice. We should have the widest expanse of sky, for night scenery. We should have a wide expanse of land or water, for the sake of a sense of liberty, yet more than for variety; and also because then the inestimable help of a telescope may be called in. Think of the difference to us between seeing from our sofas the width of a street, even if it be Sackville-street, Dublin, or Portland Place, in London, and thirty miles of sea view, with its long boundary of rocks, and the power of sweeping our glance over half a county, by means of a telescope! But the chief ground of preference of the sea is less its space than its motion, and the perpetual shifting of objects caused by it. There can be nothing in inland scenery which can give the sense of life and motion and connexion with the world like sea changes. The motion of a waterfall is too continuous,—too little varied,—as the breaking of the waves would be, if that were all the sea could afford. The fitful action of a windmill,—the waving of trees, the ever-changing aspects of mountains are good and beautiful: but there is something more life-like in the going forth and

return of ships, in the passage of fleets, and in the never-ending variety of a fishery.

But then, there must not be too much sea. The strongest eyes and nerves could not support the glare and oppressive vastness of an unrelieved expanse of waters. I was aware of this in time, and fixed myself where the view of the sea was inferior to what I should have preferred, if I had come to the coast for a summer visit. Between my window and the sea is a green down, as green as any field in Ireland; and on the nearer half of this down, haymaking goes forward in its season. It slopes down to a hollow, where the Prior of old preserved his fish, there being sluices formerly at either end, the one opening upon the river, and the other upon the little haven below the Priory, whose ruins still crown the rock. From the Prior's fish-pond, the green down slopes upwards again to a ridge; and on the slope are cows grazing all summer, and half way into the winter. Over the ridge, I survey the harbour and all its traffic, the view extending from the light-houses far to the right, to a horizon of sea to the left. Beyond the harbour lies another county, with, first, its sandy beach, where there are frequent wrecks—too



interesting to an invalid,—and a fine stretch of rocky shore to the left; and above the rocks, a spreading heath, where I watch troops of boys flying their kites; lovers and friends taking their breezy walk on Sundays; the sportsman with his gun and dog; and the washerwomen converging from the farm-houses on Saturday evenings, to carry their loads, in company, to the village on the yet further height. I see them, now talking in a cluster, as they walk each with her white burden on her head, and now in file, as they pass through the narrow lane; and finally they part off on the village green, each to some neighbouring house of the gentry. Behind the village and the heath, stretches the rail-road; and I watch the train triumphantly careering along the level road, and puffing forth its steam above hedges and groups of trees, and then labouring and panting up the ascent, till it is lost between two heights, which at last bound my view. But on these heights are more objects; a windmill, now in motion and now at rest; a lime-kiln, in a picturesque rocky field; an ancient church tower, barely visible in the morning, but conspicuous when the setting sun shines upon it; a colliery, with its lofty wagon-



way, and the self-moving wagons running hither and thither, as if in pure wilfulness ; and three or four farms, at various degrees of ascent, whose yards, paddocks, and dairies I am better acquainted with than their inhabitants would believe possible. I know every stack of the one on the heights. Against the sky I see the stacking of corn and hay in the season, and can detect the slicing away of the provender, with an accurate eye, at the distance of several miles. I can follow the sociable farmer in his summer-evening ride, pricking on in the lanes where he is alone, in order to have more time for the unconscionable gossip at the gate of the next farm-house, and for the second talk over the paddock-fence of the next, or for the third or fourth before the porch, or over the wall, when the resident farmer comes out, pipe in mouth, and puffs away amidst his chat, till the wife appears, with a shawl over her cap, to see what can detain him so long ; and the daughter follows, with her gown turned over head (for it is now chill evening), and at last the sociable horseman finds he must be going, looks at his watch, and, with a gesture of surprise, turns his steed down a steep broken way to the beach, and canters home over

the sands, left hard and wet by the ebbing tide, the white horse making his progress visible to me through the dusk. Then, if the question arises which has most of the gossip spirit, he or I, there is no shame in the answer. Any such small amusement is better than harmless—is salutary—which carries the spirit of the sick prisoner abroad into the open air, and among country people. When I shut down my window, I feel that my mind has had an airing.

But there are many times when these distant views cannot be sought ; when we are too languid for any objects that do not present themselves near at hand. Here, too, I am provided. I overlook gardens, and particularly a well-managed market-garden, from which I have learned, and enjoyed, not a little. From the radish-sowing in early spring, to the latest turnip and onion cropping, I watch the growth of everything, and hence feel an interest in the frosts and rain, which I should otherwise not dream of. A shower is worth much to me when the wide potato-beds, all dry and withering in the morning, are green and fresh in the evening light ; and the mistress of the garden, bringing up her pails of frothing milk from the



cow-house, looks about her with complacency, and comes forth with fresh alacrity to cut the young lettuces which are sent for, for somebody's supper of cold lamb.

The usual drawback of a sea-side residence is the deficiency of trees. I see none (except through the telescope) but one shabby sycamore, which grows between my eye and the chimney of the baths in the haven. But this is not a pure disadvantage. I may see less beauty in summer, but I also see less dreariness in winter.

The winter beauty of the coast is a great consideration. The snow does not lie ; at least rarely for more than a very few hours ; and then it has no time to lose its lustre. When I look forth in the morning, the whole land may be sheeted with glittering snow, while the myrtle-green sea swells and tumbles, forming an almost incredible contrast to the summer aspect of both, and even to the afternoon aspect ; for before sunset the snow is gone, except in the hollows ; all is green again on shore, and the waves are lilac, crested with white. My winter pleasures of this kind were, at first, a pure surprise to me. I had spent every winter of my life in a town ; and here, how different it is !



The sun shines into my room from my hour of rising till within a few minutes of dusk, and this, almost by settled custom, till February, our worst month. The sheeny sea, swelling in orange light, is crossed by fishing-boats, which look black by contrast, and there is none of the deadness of winter in the landscape; no leafless trees, no locking up with ice; and the air comes in through my open upper sash brisk, but sun-warmed. The robins twitter and hop in my flower-boxes, outside the window; and the sea-birds sit on the water, or cluster on the spits of sand left by the tide. Within-doors, all is gay and bright with flowering narcissus, tulips, crocus, and hyacinths. And at night, what a heaven! What an expanse of stars above, appearing more steadfast, the more the Northern Lights dart and quiver! And what a silvery sheet of moonlight below, crossed by vessels more black than those which looked blackest in the golden sea of the morning! It makes one's very frame shiver with a delicious surprise to look, (and the more, the oftener one looks,) at a moonlit sea through the telescope; at least, it is so with one who can never get near the object in any other way. I doubt whether there be any inland spectacle so singular

and stirring, except that which is common to both, a good telescopic view of the planets. This transcends all. It is well to see by day, the shadows of walkers on the wet sands; the shadows of the sails of a windmill on the sward; the shadow of rocks in a deep sea cave; but far beyond this is it to see the shadow of the disk of Saturn on his rings. How is it that so many sick prisoners are needlessly deprived of all these sights; shut up in a street of a town? What is there there, that can compensate them for what they lose?

There is some set-off to the winter privileges I have spoken of, in an occasional day of storms; perhaps two or three in each season. These are very dreary while they last; though, considering the reaction, the next fine day, salutary on the whole. On these days, the horror of the winds is great. One's very bed shakes under them; and some neighbour's house is pretty sure to be unroofed. The window-cushions must be removed, because nothing can keep out the rain, not even the ugly array of cloths laid over all the sashes. The rain and spray seem to ooze through the very glass. The wet comes through to the ceiling, however perfect the tiling. The splash and dash



against the panes are wearing to the nerves. Balls of foam drive, like little balloons, over the garden ; and, sooner or later in the day, we see the ominous rush of men and boys to the rocks and the ridge, and we know that there is mischief. We see either a vessel labouring over the bar, amidst an universal expectation that she will strike ; or we see, by a certain slope of the masts, that she is actually on the rocks ; or she drives wilfully over to the sands, in spite of all the efforts of steam-tugs and her own crew ; and then come forth the life-boats, which we cannot help watching, but which look as if they must themselves capsize, and increase the misery instead of preventing it. Then, when the crew are taken from the rigging, and carried up to the port, ensues the painful sight of the destruction of the vessel ; parties, or files of women, boys, and men, passing along the ridge or the sands with the spoils ; bundles of sailcloth, armsful of spars, shoulder-loads of planks ; while, in the midst, there is sure to be a report, false or true, of a vessel having foundered, somewhere near at hand. On such days, it is a relief to bar the shutters at length, and close the curtains, and light the lamp, and, if the wind will allow, to forget the



history of the day. Still more thankful are we to go to bed—I can hardly say to rest—for invalids are liable to a return in the night of the painful impressions of noon, with exaggerations, unless the agitation has been such as to wear them out with fatigue. But, as I said, such days are very few. Two or three such in a year, and two or three weeks of shifting sea-fog in spring, are nearly all the drawbacks we have; nearly the only obscurations of Nature's beauties.

How different are “the seasons, and their change,” to us, and to the busy inhabitants of towns! How common is it for townspeople to observe, that the shortest day is past without their remembering it was so near! or the equinox, or even the longest day! Whereas, we sick watchers have, as it were, a property in the changes of the seasons, and even of the moon. It is a good we would not sell for any profit, to say to ourselves, at the end of March, that the six months of longest days are now before us; that we are entering upon a region of light evenings, with their soft lulling beauties; and of short nights, when, late as we go to rest, we can almost bid defiance to horrors, and the depressions of darkness. There is a monthly

spring of the spirits too, when the young moon appears again, and we have the prospect of three weeks' pleasure in her course, if the sky be propitious. I have often smiled in detecting in myself this sense of property in such shows ; in becoming aware of a sort of resentment, of feeling of personal grievance, when the sky is not propitious ; when I have no benefit of the moon for several nights together, through the malice of the clouds, or the sea-haze in spring. But, now I have learned by observation where and when to look for the rising moon, what a superb pleasure it is to lie watching the sea-line, night after night, unwilling to shut the window, to leave the window-couch, to let the lamp be lighted, till the punctual and radiant blessing comes, answering to my hope, surpassing my expectation, and appearing to greet me with express and consolatory intent ! Should I actually have quitted life without this set of affections, if I had not been ill ? I believe it. And, moreover, I believe that my interest in these spectacles of Nature has created a new regard to them in others. I see a looking out for the rising moon among the neighbours, who have possessed the same horizon-line all their lives, but did not know its value till



they saw what it is to me. I observe the children from the cottage swinging themselves up to obtain a peep over the palings, when they see me on the watch in the window ; and an occasional peep at a planet, through my telescope, appears to dress the heavens in quite a new light to such as venture to take a look.

They do not know, however, anything of my most thrilling experience of these things—for it happens when they are all at rest. I keep late hours, (for the sake of husbanding my seasons of ease ;) and now and then I have nerve enough to look abroad for my last vision of the day, an hour after midnight, when the gibbous moon,—having forsaken the sea,—slowly surmounts the priory ruins on the high rock, appearing in the black-blue heaven like a quite different planet from that which I have been watching,—and from that which I shall next greet, a slender crescent in the light western sky, just after sunset. To go from this spectacle to one's bed is to recover for the hour one's health of soul, at least : and the remembrance of such a thrill is a cordial for future sickly hours which strengthens by keeping.

I have a sense of property too in the larks



which nestle in all the furrows of the down. It is a disquietude to see them start up and soar, with premature joy, on some mild January day, before our snows and storms have begun, when I detect in myself a feeling of duty to the careless creatures,—a longing to warn them, by my superior wisdom, that they must not reckon yet on spring. And on April mornings, when the shadows are strong in the hollows, and some neighbour's child sends me in a handful of primroses from the fields, I look forth, as for my due, to see the warblers spring and fall, and to catch their carol above the hum and rejoicing outcry of awakening Nature. If the yellow butterflies do not come to my flower-box in the sunny noon, I feel myself wronged. But they do come,—and so do the bees: and there are times when the service is too importunate,—when the life and light are more than I can bear, and I draw down the blind, and shut myself in with my weakness, and with thoughts more abstract. But when, in former days, had simple, natural influences such power over me? How is it that the long-suffering sick, already deprived of so much, are ever needlessly debarred from natural and renovating pleasures like these?

Watch the effect upon them of a picture, or a print of a breezy tree,—of a gushing stream,—of a group of children swinging on a gate in a lane. If they do not (because they cannot) express in words the thirst of their souls for these images, observe how their eyes wistfully follow the portfolio or volume of plates which ministers this scenery to them. Observe how, in looking at portraits, their notice fastens at once on any morsel of back-ground which presents any rural objects. Observe the sad fondness with which they cherish flowers,—how reluctantly it is admitted that they fade. Mark the value of presents of bulbs,—above the most splendid array of plants in flower, which kind people love to send to sick prisoners. Plants in bloom are beautiful and glorious ; but the pleasure to a prisoner is to see the process of growth. It is less the bright and fragrant flower that the spirit longs for than the spectacle of vegetation.

Blessings on the inventors and improvers of fern-houses ! We feel towards them a mingling of the gratitude due to physicians, and appropriate to the Good People. We find under their glass-bells fairy gifts, and prescriptions devised with



consummate skill. In towns, let the sick prisoner have a fern-house as a compensation for rural pleasures; and in the country as an addition to them.

Blessings on the writers of voyages and travels; and not the less for their not having contemplated our case in describing what they have seen! A school-boy's or a soldier's eagerness after voyages and travels is nothing to that of an invalid. We are insatiable in regard to this kind of book. To us it is scenery, exercise, fresh air. The new knowledge is quite a secondary consideration. We are weary of the aspect of a chest of drawers,—tired of certain marks on the wall, and of many unchangeable features of our apartment; so that when a morning comes, and our eyes open on these objects, and we foresee the seasons of pain or bodily distress, or mental depression, which we know must come round as regularly as the hours, we loathe the prospect of our day. Things clear up a little when we rise, and we think we ought to be writing a letter to such-a-one, which has been on our conscience for some time. While the paper and ink are being brought, we put out our hand for that book,—arrived or laid in sight



this morning. It is a Journal of Travels to the Polar Sea, or over the Passes of the Alps,—or in the Punjâb,—or in Central or South America. Here the leaves turn over rapidly ;—there we linger, and read one paragraph again and again, dwelling fondly on some congregation of images, to be seen by our bodily eyes no more :—on we go till stopped by the fluttering and distress,—the familiar pain, or the leaden down-sinking of the spirits, and wonder that our trying time has come so soon, before the letter is written. It has not come soon ;—it is only that some hours of our penance have been beguiled,—that we have been let out of our prison for a holiday, and are now brought back to our schooling. But the good does not end here. We see everything with different eyes,—the chest of drawers,—the walls,—the bookshelves, and the pattern of the rug. We have been seeing the Northern Lights and icebergs : we have been watching for avalanches, or for the sun-rise from Etna, or gazing over the Pampas, or peering through the primeval forest ; and fragments of these visions freshen the very daylight to us.

Blessings, above all, on Christopher North ! We

cannot but wonder whether he ever cast a thought upon such as we are when breasting the breeze on the moors, or pressing up the mountain-side, or watching beside the trout-stream ; or summoning the fowls of heaven, and passing them in review into his Aviary ;—or, especially, whether he had any thought of recreating us when he sent forth his “*Recreations*” within reach of our hands. If he did not think of sick prisoners in issuing his vital, breezy book, he has missed a pleasure worthy of a heart like his. He pities the town-dwellers who might relish nature and will not : but his pity for them must be destitute of the zest which pity derives from a consciousness of helpfulness. He can hardly help those to country privileges who will not help themselves. But has he remembered the chamber-dwellers,—the involuntary plodders within narrow bounds,—few in comparison with the other class, it is true, but, if estimated by emotion—by experience in which his heart can sympathise, not less entitled to his regards ?

Whether he thought of us or not, he has recreated us. Whether he is now conscious of the fact or not, his spirit has come, many a time while his tired body slept, and opened our prison-doors,



and led us a long flight over mountain and moor, lake and lea, and dropped us again on our beds, refreshed and soothed, to dream at least of having felt the long-lost sensation of health once more. Blessings on him then, as the kindest of the friendly ghosts who use well their privilege of passing in and out of all secret and sorrowful places, as they go to and fro on the earth! If he has ministered to us with more or less deliberate intent, he needs not to be told with what heartiness we drink his health in the first full draught of the spring west wind—how cordially we pledge him in the sparkling thunder-shower, or the brimming harvest-moon.

O! if every one who sorrows for us would help us to assert our claim to Nature's nursing, we should soon have our solace and our due. We have not all the vigour and spirit,—nor even the inclination, in our morbid state, to turn our faces to the fountain of solace—the fresh waters which cool the spirit when fretted by its tormenting companion. We cannot infallibly keep alive in our weak selves the love of Nature which would lead us to repose ourselves upon her, and forget the evils which even she cannot cure. But this should



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## LIFE TO THE INVALID.

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“ There is a pause near death when men grow bold  
Toward all things else.”

ROBERT LANDOR.

“ Man will come to see that the world is the perennial miracle which the soul worketh, and be less astonished at particular wonders : he will learn that there is no profane history ; that all history is sacred ; that the universe is represented in an atom, in a moment of time. He will weave no longer a spotted life of shreds and patches, but he will live with a divine unity. He will cease from what is base and frivolous in his own life, and be content with all places, and any service he can render. He will calmly front the morrow in the negligency of that trust which carries God with it, and so hath already the whole future in the bottom of the heart.”

EMERSON.

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CAN we not all remember the time when, on first taking to heart Milton, and afterwards Aken-side,—(before knowing anything of Dante,) we conceived the grandest moment of possible existence to be that of a Seraph, poised on balanced wings, watching the bringing out of a world from chaos, its completion in fitness, beauty and radiance, and its first motion in its orbit, when sent forth by the creative hand on its everlasting way ? How many a young imagination has dwelt on this image till the act appeared to be almost one of memory,—till the vision became one of the persuasives to entertain the notion of human pre-

existence, in which we find one or another about us apt to delight! To me, this conception was, in my childhood, one of eminent delight; and when, years afterwards, I was involved in more than the ordinary toil and hurry of existence, I now and then recurred to the old image, with a sort of longing to exchange my function,—my share of the world-building in which we all have to help, for the privilege of the supposed seraph. Was there nothing prophetic, or at least provident, in this? Is not sequestration from the action of life a different thing to me from what it would have been if there had been no preparation of the imagination? Though I, and my fellows in lot, must wait long for the seraphic powers which would enable us fully to enjoy and use our position, we have the position; and it is for us to see how far we can make our privilege correspond to the anticipation.

Nothing is more impossible to represent in words, even to one's self in meditative moments, than what it is to lie on the verge of life and watch, with nothing to do but to think, and learn from what we behold. Let any one recall what it is to feel suddenly, by personal experience, the



full depth of meaning of some saying, always believed in, often repeated with sincerity, but never till now *known*. Every one has felt this, in regard to some one proverb, or divine scriptural clause, or word of some right royal philosopher or poet. Let any one then try to conceive of an extension of this realisation through all that has ever been wisely said of man and human life, and he will be endeavouring to imagine our experience. Engrossing, thrilling, overpowering as the experience is, we have each to bear it alone ; for each of us is surrounded by the active and the busy, who have a different gift and a different office ;—and if not, it is one of those experiences which are incommunicable. If we endeavour to utter our thoughts on the folly of the pursuit of wealth, on the emptiness of ambition, on the surface nature of distinctions of rank, &c. we are only saying what our hearers have had by heart all their lives from books,—through a long range of authors, from Solomon to Burns. Spoken moralities really reach only those whom they immediately concern ;—and they are such as are saying the same things within their own hearts. We utter them under two conditions :—sometimes

because we cannot help it ; and sometimes under a sense of certainty that a human heart somewhere is needing the sympathy for which we yearn.

You, my fellow-sufferer, now lying on your couch, the newspaper dropping from your hand, while your eyes are fixed on the lamp, are you not smiling at the thought that you have preserved, up to this time, more or less of that faith of your childhood—that everything that is in print is true ? Before we had our present leisure for reflection, we read one newspaper,—perhaps occasionally one on the other side. We found opposition of views ; but this was to be expected from diversities of minds and position. Now the whole press is open to us, and we see what is said on all sides. What an astonishing result ! We hear that Cabinet Ministers are apt to grow nervous about newspaper commentaries on their conduct. To us this seems scarcely possible, seeing, as we do, that, though every paper may be useful reading for the suggestions and other lights it affords, every one is at fault, as a judge. Every one forgets, actually or politicly, that it is in possession of only partial information, generally speaking ; we find no guarding intimation to the reader, that there may be



information behind which might alter the aspect of the question. Such notice may be too much to expect of diurnal literature ; but the confusion made by the positiveness of all parties, proceeding on their respective faulty grounds of fact—a positiveness usually proportioned to the faultiness of the grounds—is such as might, one would think, relieve Cabinet Ministers who have their work at heart, from any very anxious solicitude about the judgments of the press, in regard to unfinished affairs. Meantime, what a work is done ! Amidst the flat contradictions of fact, and oppositions of opinion,—amidst the passion which sets men's wits to work to conceive of and propose all imaginable motives and results, what an abundance of light is struck out ! From a crowd of falsehoods, what a revelation we have of the truth, which no one man, nor party of men, could reveal !—of the wants, wishes, and ideas of every class or coterie of society that can speak for itself, and of some that cannot !

Observe the process to which all this conduces. Before we were laid aside, we read, as everybody read, philosophical histories, in which the progress of society was presented ; we read of the old times,



when the chieftain, whatever his title, dwelt in the castle on the steep, while his retainers were housed in a cluster of dwellings under the shadow of his protection. We read of the indispensable function of the Priest, in the castle, and of the rise of his order ; and then of the Lawyer and *his* order. We read of the origin of Commerce, beginning in monopoly ; and then of the gradual admission of more and more parties to the privileges of trade, and their settling themselves in situations favourable for the purpose, and apart from the head monopolists. We read of the indispensable function of the Merchant, and the rise of *his* order. We read of the feuds and wars of the aristocratic orders, which, while fatally weakening them, left leisure for the middle and lower classes to rise and grow, and strengthen themselves, till the forces of society were shifted, and its destinies presented a new aspect. We read of the sure, though sometimes intermitting, advance of popular interests, and reduction of aristocratic power and privileges, throughout the general field of civilisation. We read of all these things, and assented to what seemed so very clear—so distinct an interpretation of what had happened up to our own day. At the

same time, busy and involved as we were in the interests of the day, how little use did we make of the philosophic retrospect, which might and should have been prophetic ! You, I think, dreaded in every popular movement a whirlwind of destruction—in every popular success a sentence of the dissolution of society. You believed that such a man, or such a set of men, could give stability to our condition, and fix us, for an unassignable time, at the point of the last settlement, or what you assumed to be the latest. I, meanwhile, believed that our safety or peril, for a term, depended on the event of this or that movement, the carrying of this or that question. I was not guilty of fearing political ruin. I did with constancy believe in the certain advance of popular interests, and demolition of all injurious power held by the few ; but I believed that more depended on single questions than was really involved in such, and that separate measures would be more comprehensive and complete than a dispassionate observer thinks possible. In the midst of all this, you and I were taken apart ; and have not our eyes been opened to perceive, in the action of society, the continuation of the history we read so long ago ? I need



scarcely allude to the progress of popular interests, and the unequalled rapidity with which some great questions are approaching to a settlement. We have a stronger tendency to speculate on the movements of the minds engaged in the transaction of affairs, than on the rate of advance of the affairs themselves. With much that is mortifying and sad, and something that is amusing, how much is there instructive ! And how clear, as in a bird's-eye view of a battle, or as in the analysis of a wise speculative philosopher, is the process !

We see everybody that is busy doing what we did—overrating the immediate object. There is no sin in this, and no harm, however it proves incessantly the fallibility of human judgments. It is ordered by Him who constituted our minds and our duties, that our business of the hour should be magnified by the operation of our powers upon it. Without this, nothing would ever be done ; for every man's energy is no more than sufficient for his task ; and there would be a fatal abatement of energy, if a man saw his present employment in the proportion in which it must afterwards appear to other affairs,—the limitation and weakness of our powers causing us to apprehend feebly the



details of what we see, when we endeavour to be comprehensive in our views. The truth seems to lie in a point of view different from either. I doubt whether it is possible for us to overrate the positive importance of what we are doing, though we are continually exaggerating its value in relation to other objects of our own, while it seems pretty certain that we entertain an inadequate estimate of interests that we have dismissed, to make room for new ones.

Next, we see the present operation of old liberalising causes so strong as to be irresistible ; men of all parties—or, at least, reasonable men of all parties—so carried along by the current of events, that it is scarcely now a question with any one what is the point towards which the vessel of the State is to be carried next, but how she is to be most safely steered amidst the perils which beset an ordained course. One party mourns that no great political hero rises up to retard the speed to a rate of safety ; and another party mourns that no great political hero presents himself to increase while guiding our speed by the inspiration of his genius ; while there are a few tranquil observers who believe that, glorious as would be the advent

of a great political hero at any time, we could never better get on without one, because never before were principles so clearly and strongly compelling their own adoption, and working out their own results. They are now the masters, and not the servants, of Statesmen; and inestimable as would be the boon of a great individual will, which should work in absolute congeniality with these powers, we may trust, for our safety and progress, in their dominion over all lesser wills.

Next, we perceive, (and we ask whether some others can be as blind to it as they appear to be,) that a great change has taken place in the morals—at least, in the conventional morals, of Statesmanship. Consistency was once, and not long ago, a primary virtue in a Statesman,—consistency, not only in general principle and aims, through a whole public life, but in views of particular questions. Now it has become far otherwise. The incurable bigots of political society are the only living politicians, except a very small number of so-called ultra-liberals, who can boast of unchanged views. Perhaps every public man of sense and honour has changed his opinions, on more or fewer questions, since he entered public life. It cannot be



otherwise in a period of transition, in a monarchy where the popular element is rising, and the rulers are selected from the privileged classes alone. The virtue of such functionaries now is, not that their opinions remain stationary, and that their views remain consistent through a whole life, but that they can live and learn.

And there are two ways of doing this—two kinds of men who do it. One kind of man has all his life believed that certain popular principles are for the good of society ; he now learns to extend this faith to measures which he once thought ultra and dangerous, and embraces these measures with an earnest heart, for their own value. Another sort of man has predilections opposed to these measures, laments their occurrence, and wishes the old state of affairs could have been preserved ; but he sees that it is impossible,—he sees the strength of the national will, and the tendency of events so united with these measures, that there is peril in resistance. He thinks it a duty to make a timely proposal and grant of them, rather than endanger the general allegiance and tranquillity by delay, refusal, or conflict.

Now, though we may have our preferences in



regard to such public men, we cannot impute guilt to either kind. We see that it is unjust to impute moral or political sin in either case. The great point of interest to you and me is to observe how such new necessities and methods work in society.

The incurables of the privileged classes of course act after their kind. They are full of astonishment and feeble rage. The very small number of really philosophical liberals—once ultras, but now nearly overtaken by the times—see tranquilly the fulfilment of their anticipations, and anticipate still—how wisely, time will show. Of the two intermediate parties, the question is, which appears most able to live and learn? From the start the liberals had originally, it would seem that they must hold the more dignified position of the two. But, judging them out of their own mouths, what can we think and say?

To us it appears a noble thing to apprehend truth early, not merely as a guess, but as a ground of opinion and action. A man who is capable of this is secure that his opinions will be embraced by more and more minds, till they become the universal belief of men. It is natural to him to feel satisfaction as the fellowship spreads—both because fellowship is pleasant to himself, and

because the hour thereby draws nearer and nearer for society to be fully blessed with the truth which was early apparent to him. When this truth becomes indisputable and generally diffused, and its related action takes place, his satisfaction should be complete.

What an exception to this natural process, this healthy enjoyment, do we witness in the political transactions of the time! Whatever may be thought of the consistency of the most rapidly progressive party, what can be said of the philosophy of the more early liberal? At every advance of their former opponents, they are exasperated. They fight for every tardily-apprehended political truth as for a private property. They not only complain—"You thought the contrary in such a year!" "Here are the words you spoke in such a year; the reverse of what you say now!" but they cry, on every declaration of conversion to one of their long-avowed opinions, "Hands off! that is *my* truth; I got it so many years ago, and you shan't touch it!" To you and me (to whom it is much the same thing to look back and to look abroad), it irresistibly occurs to ask whether it was thus in former transition-states of society; whether,



for instance, assured and long-avowed Christians exclaimed, on occasion of the conversion of enlightened heathens—"You extolled Jupiter in such a year, and now you disparage him." "Remember what you said of Diana no longer ago than such a year!" "Do you think we shall admit you to our Christ? He is ours these ten years!" Those of us who believe and feel that the development of moral science (of which political is one department) is as progressive as that of physical, cannot but glance at the aspect of such conduct in relation to the discovery of a new chemical agency, or important heavenly body; and then . . . But enough of such illustration. Nobody doubts the absurdity, when fairly set down; though the number of grown men who have, within three years, committed it daily in newspapers, clubs, markets, and the Houses of Parliament, is so great as to be astonishing, till we discern the causes, proximate and final, of such unphilosophical discourse and demeanour.

While in this conflict grave and responsible leaders grow factious—while men of purpose forget their march onward in side-skirmishes—while reformers lose sight of the imperishable quality of



their cause, and talk of hopeless corruption and inevitable destruction—how do affairs appear to us, in virtue merely of our being out of the strife?

We see that large principles are more extensively agreed upon than ever before—more manifest to all eyes, from the very absence of a hero to work them, since they are every hour showing how irresistibly they are making their own way. We see that the tale of the multitude is told as it never was told before—their health, their minds and morals, pleaded for in a tone perfectly new in the world. We see that the dreadful sins and woes of society are the results of old causes, and that our generation has the honour of being responsible for their relief, while the disgrace of their existence belongs, certainly not to our time, and perhaps to none. We see that no spot of earth ever before contained such an amount of infallible resources as our own country at this day; so much knowledge, so much sense, so much vigour, foresight, and benevolence, or such an amount of external means. We see the progress of amelioration, silent but sure, as the shepherd on the upland sees in the valley the advance of a gush of sunshine from between two hills. He observes what the people

below are too busy to mark: how the light attains now this object and now that—how it now embellishes yonder copse, and now gilds that stream, and now glances upon the roofs of the far-off hamlet—the signs and sounds of life quickening along its course. When we remember that this is the same sun that guided the first vessels of commerce over the sea—the same by whose light Magna Charta was signed in Runnymede—that shone in the eyes of Cromwell after Naseby fight—that rose on 800,000 free blacks in the West Indies on a certain August morning—and is now shining down into the dreariest recesses of the coal-mine, the prison, and the cellar—how can we doubt that darkness is to be chased away, and God's sunshine to vivify, at last, the whole of our world?

Is it necessary, some may ask, to be sick, and apart, to see and believe these things? Events seem to show that for some—for many—sequestration from affairs is necessary to this end; for there are not a few who, in the hubbub of party, have let go their faith, and have not to this moment found it again. If there are some in the throng who can at once act and anticipate faithfully, we may thank God for the blessing. But they are sadly few.



I have said how clearly appears to us the fact and the reason of every man's exaggerating at the moment the importance of the work under his hand. Not less clear is the ordination, as old and as continuous as human action, by which men fail, more or less, of obtaining their express objects, while all manner of unexpected good arises in a collateral way. It is usual to speak of the results of the labours of alchemists in this view, everybody seeing that while we still pick out our gold from the ground, we owe much to the alchemists that they never thought of. But the same is true of almost every object of human pursuit, and even of belief. No doubt we invalids keep up our likeness to our kind, in this respect, as far as we are able to act at all; but we have more time than others to contemplate the working of the plan on a large scale. Look at the projects, the discoveries, the quackeries of the day!

With regard to the projects, however, I am at present disposed to make one partial exception—to acknowledge, as far as I can at present see, one case of singularity. I mean with regard to the New Postage. The general rule proves true in one half of it, that many great and yet unascertained



benefits are arising, of which the projector did not dream; so that a volume might be filled with anecdotes, curious to the spectator and delightful to the benevolent. But, thus far, it does not appear that any fallacy has mixed itself with the express expectations of the projector. I do not speak of the failure of his efforts to get his whole plan adopted. That will soon be a matter of small account—a disappointment and vexation gone by—a temporary trial of patience, forgotten except by the record. I mean that he has advanced no propositions which he does not seem perfectly able to prove, uttered no promises which do not appear certain to be fulfilled. This project is perhaps the noblest afloat in our country and time, considering the moral interests it involves. It is, perhaps, scarcely possible to exaggerate the force and extent of its civilising and humanising influences, especially in regard to its spreading the spirit of Home over all the occupations and interests of life, in defiance of the separating powers of distance and poverty; and it will be curious if this enterprise, besides keeping the school-child at his mother's bosom, the apprentice, the governess, and the maid-servant, at their father's hearth—and us

sick or aged people entertained daily with the flowers, music, books, sentiment and news of the world we have left—should prove an exception to all others in performing all its express promises. At present, I own, this appears no matter of doubt.

As for the discoveries or quackeries of the time, (and who will undertake to say in what instances they are not, sooner or later, compounded?) how clear is the collateral good, whatever may be the express failure? Those who receive all the sayings of the Coryphæus of the phrenologists, and those who laugh at his maps of the mind and his so-called ethics, must both admit that much knowledge of the structure of the brain, much wise care of human health and faculties, has issued from the pursuit, for the benefit of man. This Mesmerism again : who believes that it could be revived, again and again, at intervals of centuries, if there were not something in it? Who looks back upon the mass of strange but authenticated historical narratives, which might be explained by this agent, and looks, at the same time, into our dense ignorance of the structure and functions of the nervous system, and will dare to say that there is nothing in it? Whatever



quackery and imposture may be connected with it, however its pretensions may be falsified, it seems impossible but that some new insight must be obtained by its means, into the powers of our mysterious frame—some fixing down under actual cognizance, of flying and floating notions, full of awe, which have exercised the belief and courage of many wise, for many centuries.

After smiling over old books all our lives, on meeting with quaint assumptions of the Humoral pathology as true, while we supposed it exploded—behold it arising again! One cannot open a newspaper, scarcely a letter, without seeing something about the Water-cure; and grave doctors, who will listen to nothing the laity can say of anything new, (any more than they would tolerate the mention of the circulation of the blood in Harvey's day,) now intimate that the profession are disposed to believe that there is more in the humoral pathology than was thought thirty years ago, though not so much as the water-curiers presume. Is it not pretty certain, then, that something will come of this rage for the water-cure, (something more than ablution, temperance, and exercise,) though its professors must be em-

balmed as quacks in the literature of the time? Is there not still another operation of the same principle involved in the case? Are we not growing sensibly more merciful, more wisely humane towards empirics themselves, when they cease to be our oracles? Are we not learning, from their jumbled discoveries and failures, that empiricism itself is a social function, indispensable, made so by God, however ready we may be to bestow our cheap laughter upon it? To us retired observers of life there is too much of this easy mockery for our taste, or for the morals of society. Ours seems to be an age when it is to the credit of others, besides statesmen, that they can live and learn; and there is no getting on in our learning without empiricism. It is less wise than easy to ridicule its connection with non-essential modes and appearances prescribed or suggested by the passions, needs, or follies of the time. It is most wise, and should be easy, to have faith that the determining conditions of all experimental discovery will be ascertained in due season. If, meanwhile, we can obtain from the magnetisers any light as to any function of the nervous system, we may excuse them from the performance of



some promised feats. If the Homœopathists can help us to any new principle of natural antagonism to disease, they may well abide the laugh which I am not aware that the serious of their number have ever provoked by any extreme and unsupported pretensions.

But at this rate, occupying this scope, I shall never have done. I might write on for every day of my life, and be no nearer the end of our speculations. Let what I have said go for specimens of our observation of life in two or three particulars.

When I think of what I have seen with my own eyes from one back window, in the few years of my illness; of how indescribably clear to me are many truths of life from my observation of the doings of the tenants of a single row of houses; it seems to me scarcely necessary to see more than the smallest sample, in order to analyse life in its entirety. I could fill a volume—and an interesting one too—with a simple detail of what I have witnessed, as I said, from one back-window. But I must tell nothing. These two or three little courts and gardens ought to be as sacred as any interior. Nothing of the spy shall mix itself with

my relation to neighbours who have ever been kind to me. Suffice it, that if I saw no further into the world with the mental than with the bodily eye, I should be kept in a state of perpetual wonder, (of pleasing wonder, on the whole,) at the operation of the human heart and mind, in its most ordinary circumstances. Nothing can be more ordinary than the modes of life which I overlook, yet am I kept wide awake in my watch by ever new instances of the fulness of pleasure derivable from the scantiest sources ; of the vividness of emotion excitable by the most trifling incidents ; of the wonderful power pride has of pampering itself upon the most meagre food ; and, above all, of the infinite ingenuity of human love. Nothing, perhaps, has impressed me so deeply as the clear view I have of almost all, if not quite the whole, of the suffering I have witnessed being the consequence of vice or ignorance. But when my heart has sickened at the sight, and at the thought of so much gratuitous pain, it has grown strong again in the reflection that, if unnecessary, this misery is temporary,—that the true ground of mourning would be if the pain were not from causes which are remediable. Then I cannot but look forward



to the time when the bad training of children,—the petulancies of neighbours—the errors of the ménage—the irksome superstitions, and the seductions of intemperance, shall all have been annihilated by the spread of intelligence, while the mirth at the minutest jokes—the proud plucking of nose-gays—the little neighbourly gifts, (less amusing hereafter, perhaps, in their taste)—the festal observances—the disinterested and refined acts of self-sacrifice and love, will remain as long as the human heart has mirth in it, or a humane complacency and self-respect,—as long as its essence is what it has ever been, “but a little lower than the angels.”

How is it possible to give an idea of what the gradual disclosure of the fates of individuals is to us? In reading chronicles, and the lighter kinds of history, we have all found ourselves eagerly watching the course of love and domestic life, and pausing over the winding up, at death, of the lot of personages whose mere names were all the interest we began with. To us, in the monotony of our lives, it seems as if other people's lives slipped away with the rapidity with which we

read a book, while the interest we feel is that of personal knowledge. It is as if Time himself were present unseen, whispering to us of a new kindled love,—of marriage, with all its details of “pomp and circumstance ;” and then comes the deeper social interest,—the opening of a glimpse into the vista of new generations, while all around the other interests of life are transacting, and the children we knew at their parents’ knees are abroad in the world, acting for themselves, and putting a hand to the destinies of society.

Of all the announcements made in the silence of our solitude, none are so striking as those of deaths, familiar as the thought of death is to us, and natural as our own death would appear to ourselves, and to everybody. To present witnesses, and in the midst of the activity of life, the spectacle of death loses half its force. It is we who feel the awful beauty of it, when the great Recorder intimates to us that they who were strenuous in mutual conflict have lain down side by side ; that to old age its infirmities matter no longer, as the body itself is surrendered ; that the weary spirit of care is at rest, and that the most active affections and occupations of life have been



brought to a sudden close. Many young and busy persons wish, as I used to wish, that Time would be prophet as well as watchman. On New Year's Eves, such long to divine how many, and who of those they know, will be smitten and withdrawn during the coming year. We, in our solitude, do not desire to forestal the unrolling of the scroll. To ponder the register of the year's deaths at its close, is enough for us, to whom our seclusion serves for all purposes of speculation. While we are waiting, every year conveys away before us the infant, (a new immortality created before our eyes); the busy citizen, or indispensable mother, (showing how much more important in the eye of God is it what we are than what we do;) the young maiden, full of sympathy, (perhaps for us,) and of hope; and the aged, full of years, but perhaps not less of life. Such is the register of every year at its close.

To us, whose whole life is sequestered,—who see nothing of the events of which we hear so much, or see them only as gleam or shadow passing along our prison-walls, there is something indescribably affecting in the act of regarding History, Life, and Speculation as one. All are

enhanced to us by their melting into each other. History becomes like actual life; life becomes comprehensive as history, and abstract as speculation. Not only does human life, from the cradle to the grave, lie open to us, but the whole succession of generations, without the boundary line of the past being interposed; and with the very clouds of the future so thinned,—rendered so penetrable, as that we believe we discern the salient and bright points of the human destiny yet to be revealed.

It would be impossible to set down, within any moderate limits, notices of changes in the Modes of life,—modes arising from progressive civilisation, and deeply affecting morals;—but there is one branch of one great change, which I will mention, as it bears a relation to the morals of the sick-room.

We all know how the present action of our new civilisation works to the impairing of Privacy. As new discoveries are causing all-penetrating physical lights so to abound as that, as has been said, we shall soon not know where in the world to get any darkness, so our new facilities for every sort



of communication work to reduce privacy much within its former limits. There are some limits, however, which ought to be preserved with vigilance and care, as indispensable, not only to comfort, but to some of the finest virtues and graces of mind and life.

It is to be hoped that the privacy of *vivâ voce* conversation will ever remain sacred: but it is known that that which ought to be as holy, that of epistolary correspondence,—(the private conversation of distant friends,) is constantly and deliberately violated, where there are certain inducements to do so. The press works so diligently and beneficially for society at large, that there is a tendency to commit everything to it, on utilitarian considerations of a rather coarse kind: and the moment it can be made out that the publication of anything will and may do some ostensible good, the thing is published,—whatever considerations of a different or a higher sort may lie behind. If the people of note in society were inquired of, they would say that the privilege—the right—of privacy of epistolary correspondence now exists only for the obscure;—and for them, only till some person meets them whose zeal for the public

good leads him to lay hold on all material by which anybody may be supposed likely to learn anything. As for people of note,—their letters are naturally preserved by the recipients : when the writer dies, these recipients are plied with entreaties and remonstrances,—placed in a position of cruel difficulty (as it is to many) between their delicacy of affection for the deceased, and the pain of being made responsible for intercepting his fame, and depriving society of the benefit of the disclosure of his living mind.

Under this state of things, what happens? Some destroy, through life, all the letters they receive, but those on business. Some, with an agonising heart, burn them after the writer's death, to escape the requisitions of executors. Many, alas! resign their privilege of freedom of epistolary speech, and write no letters which any one would care to preserve for an hour. Some call in their own letters ;—a painful process, both to writer and receivers. Of such as do not care what becomes of their letters, there is no need to say anything. Their feelings require no consideration, for their letters cannot be of a private,—nor, therefore, of the most valuable kind. The



misery of the liability is in regard to letters of affection and confidence,—letters which the writer could no more bear to see again than to have notes taken of the out-pourings of his heart in an hour of confidence. It is too certain that many such letters are now never written which crave to be so: and it is much to be feared that some letters, purporting to be private, are written with a view to ultimate publication; and thus the receiver is insulted, or there is a sacrifice of honesty all round.

I do not see any probability of a dearth of biographies. I believe that there will always be interest enough in human life and character to secure a sufficiency of records of individuals:—that there will always be enough of persons whose letters are not of a very private kind,—always enough of provided and exceptional cases to serve society with a sufficiency of biography, of a duly analytical kind. But if I did not believe this,—if I believed that the choice lay between a sacrifice of the completest order of biography and that of the inviolability of private epistolary correspondence, I could not hesitate for a moment. I would keep the old and precious privacy,—the inestim-

able right of every one who has a friend and can write to him ;—I would keep our written confidence from being made biographical material, as anxiously as I would keep our spoken conversation from being noted down for the good of society. I would keep the power of free speech under all the influences of life and fate,—and leave Biography to exist or perish.

And pretty sure it is of existence. It has, for its material, the life and actions of all men and women of note ;— their printed and otherwise public writings and sayings ;—the recollections of those who knew them ; and, in no small number of cases, material which, however we may wonder at, we have only to take and be thankful for. A Doddridge keeps a copy of every letter or note he ever wrote, labelled and put by for posthumous use. A D'Arblay spends her last hours in elaborating her revelations of the transactions, private and public, of her day ; and revises, for publication, the expressions of fondness and impulse, written to sisters and other intimates, long dead. A Rousseau here and there gives more. One way and another, the resources of biography are secure enough, without encroachment on a sacred



process of intercourse. Biography will never fail. Would that we were all equally secure of a higher matter,—our right of freedom of epistolary speech!

“But when all are dead,—and nobody concerned remains to be hurt?” remonstrates one. The reply is, that as long as people of note, who love their friends, remain, there are some left to be concerned and injured.

“But,” says another, “would you object to do good, after your death, by your letters being published?” The reply is that, in the supposition, I see an enormous sacrifice of a higher and greater good to a lower and smaller. No letters, in any number and of any quality,—if they exhibited all the wisdom of Solomon, and all the graces of the Queen of Sheba, could do so much good as a single clear and strong protest against the preservation of strictly private letters for biographical material.

“But,” says another, “had you not better leave the matter to the discretion of survivors? Surely you can trust your executors;—surely you can trust the friends who will survive you.” The reply is—when this critical state of our morals is

past, no doubt executors may be trusted about letters, as about other matters. But the very point of the case is that its morality is not yet ascertained by those who do not suffer under the liability, and have not fellow-feeling with those who do. My executors may very sincerely think it their duty to publish my most private letters,—and even to be now laying them by in order for the purpose: while I feel that, once aroused to a view of the liability, I could more innocently leave to the discretion of survivors the disposition of lands and money than that of my private utterances to my friends. In a case of differing or opposing views of duty,—if my own is clear and stringent, I cannot innocently leave the matter to the chance of other persons' convictions. There cannot be a more strictly personal duty, and I must do it myself.

I have, therefore, done it. Having made the discovery of the preservation of my letters for purposes of publication hereafter, I have ascertained my own legal rights, and acted upon them. I have adopted legal precautions against the publication of my private letters;—I have made it a condition of my confidential correspondence that



my letters shall not be preserved: and I have been indulged by my friends, generally, with an acquiescence in my request that my entire correspondence, except such as relates to business, shall be destroyed. Of course, I do as I would be done by. The privacy I claim for myself, I carefully guard for others. I keep no letters of a private and passing nature. I know that others are thinking and acting with me. We enjoy, by this provision, a freedom and fulness of epistolary correspondence which could not possibly exist if the press loomed in the distance, or executors' eyes were known to be in wait hereafter. Our correspondence has all the flow and lightness of the most secret talk. This is a present reward, and a rich one, for the effort and labour of making our views and intentions understood. But it is not our only reward. We perceive that we have fixed attention upon what is becoming an important point of Morals: and we feel, in our inmost hearts, that we have done what we could to guard from encroachment an important right, and from destruction a precious privilege. This may appear a strange statement to persons whose privacy is safe in their obscurity. Those who know in

their own experience the liabilities of fame, will understand, and deeply feel, what I have said.

I have mentioned above, that, to us in seclusion, History, Life, and Speculation, assume a continuity such as would not have been believed possible by ourselves in former days, when they appeared to constitute departments of study as separate as moral studies can be. It would be curious and interesting to an observer of the human mind, to pass from retreat to retreat, and watch the progress of this fusion of objects ; to see the formerly busy member of society — “the practical man,” — growing speculative in his turn of thought ; the speculative writer nourishing more and more of an antiquarian taste ; and the antiquary finding seclusion serve as well as the passage of ages, and viewing the modes and instruments of the life of to-day with the eye and the gusto of the antiquary of ten centuries hence.

And not only in their studies would men of such differing tastes be found to be brought together under the influences of sequestration from the world. There are matters of moral perception and taste in which they would draw near no less remarkably. The one conspicuous, undying



humanity, which is the soul of all the forms of life that they contemplate, must be, to all, the sun of their intellectual day, beneath whose penetrating light all adventitious distinctions melt into insignificance. Distinctions of rank, for instance, become attenuated to a previously inconceivable degree. To the antiquary, as well as to the most radical speculator, there would be little more in the sovereign entering the sick-room than any other stranger whom kindness might bring. It requires that we should live in the midst of the arrangements of society, that our conventional ideas should be nourished by daily associations, in order to keep up even the remembrance of differences of hereditary rank, so overpowering in our view are the great interests of life which are common to all,—Duty, Thought, Love, Joy, Sorrow, and Death.

If the sovereign were to enter our rooms, there would be strong interests and affections connected with her, but interests relating to her responsibilities and her destinies, and scarcely at all to her rank—to the singularity, and not the exaltation, of her position. It is a strong doubt to me, whether one of high degree, placed in our circum-

stances, could long retain aristocratic ideas and tendencies; whether to the proudest noble, shut up in his chamber for five years, the cottage child he sees from his window, the footboy who brings his fuel, must not necessarily become as imposing to his imagination and his heart as the young princes of the blood.

Something of the same process takes place, even with regard to the distinctions of intellectual nobility. As for the nothingness of literary fame, amidst the stress of personal trial (except in the collateral benefits it brings), an hour in the sick-room might convince the most superstitious worshipper of celebrity. As for the rest; in the presence of the general ignorance, on the brink of that black abyss, our best lights are really so ineffectual, that it is impossible to pride ourselves on our intellectual differences, ranging merely as from the torch to the farthing candle.

In truth, in our retreat, moral considerations are all in all. Moral distinctions are the chief; and moral interests, common to all, are supreme. They are so from their essential nature; and they are so to us especially, from the singular advantage of our position for seeing their beauty, and the



abundance of it. We could make known—what is little suspected by busy stirrers in the world, and wholly disbelieved by despondent moralists who dwell amidst its apparent confusion—that there is a deep heaven lying inclosed in the very centre of society, and a genuine divinity residing in the heart of every member of it, which might, if we would but recognise it, check our longing to leave the present scene, to search for God and Heaven elsewhere. All that is most frivolous and insignificant is ever most noisy and obtrusive; all that is most wicked is most boastful and audacious; all that is worst in men, and society, has a tendency to come uppermost; and thus the most superficial observers of life are the most despondent. Meantime, whatever is holy, pure, and peaceable, works silently and unremittingly; and while turbulent passions are exhausting themselves before the eyes of men, a calm and perpetual renovation is spreading outwards from the central heart of humanity. I have the image before my eyes at this moment—the awful type of the blessed reality—in the tossing sea, which the neighbours dare hardly look upon. It rages and rolls, it dashes the drift-wood on the shore, and heavy

squalls come driving over it, like messengers of dismay. At this very instant, how calm are its depths! There light dwells, as long as there is light in heaven; and there is no end to the treasures of beauty on which it shines. If it be a fable that there are happy beings dwelling there, basking and singing, unconscious of the tempests overhead, it is certainly true that it is thus in the upper world, of which the ocean is a type. It is true, as a friend said to me, that "the dark is full of beautiful things." Without an image, speaking in the plainest and most absolute terms, the least known parts of human life are full of moral beauty. I am fully persuaded, that, if we wish to extend and confirm our ideas of Heaven, we should not wander back and afar to the old Eden, or forward and upward to some bright star of the firmament, but we should look into the retired places of our own actual world, of our own country, of our own town and village. We should look into the faces to be met in the street every day; we should look round by the light of our common sun. However, my immediate business is to say that we, who are not abroad in the streets, and cannot go in bodily presence into the by-places of life, have more of



this heaven disclosed to us than others, because we appear to need it more. If any one of us could and might tell what we know of the good of human hearts, the heavenly deeds of human hands, the desponding would hang their heads no longer with fear, but with shame for their fear. If I alone might make a record of the heavenly aspects which have been presented in this one room, such a record would extinguish all revilings of man and of life. And when I think that what has appeared to me must, in natural course, have appeared to all my companions in infirmity, when I gather into one all these revelations of the real moral life of society, I perceive that, till death satisfies us in regard to a local heaven, we may well be satisfied with that which lies all round about us—not mute, while tender and pitying voices speak to us; nor wholly unseen, while tearful or kindling eyes meet our own.

Thus, in some few of its leading aspects, does Life appear to the invalid.

## DEATH TO THE INVALID.

“To smell a turf of fresh earth is wholesome for the body : no less are the thoughts of mortality cordial to the soul.”

FULLER.

“And yet as angels, in some brighter dreams,  
Call to the soul when man doth sleep,  
So some strange thoughts transcend our wonted themes,  
And into glory peep.”

HENRY VAUGHAN.

WHAT subject is so interesting to the full of life as that of death? What taste is so universal in childhood and youth as that for learning all that can be known of the thoughts and feelings of the dying? Did we not all, in our young days, turn to the death part in all biographies; to the death articles in all cyclopædias; to the discourses on sickness and death in all sermon books; to the prayers in the prospect of death in all books of devotion? Do not the most common-place writers of fiction crowd their novels with death scenes, and indifferent tragedy writers kill off almost all their characters? Do not people crowd to executions; and do not those who stay at home learn all they can of the last words and demeanour of the sufferers? Are not the visions of heroic children,



(and of many grown children), chiefly about pain and a noble departure? Is there any curiosity more lively than that which we all feel about the revelations of persons resuscitated from drowning? Is it not their nearer position to death which makes sick persons so awful to children who are not familiar with them,—so interesting a subject of speculation to all? How is it then with the invalids themselves?

Nothing need be said here of short, sharp, fatal illness. Most of us know that short, sharp illnesses, not fatal, have not enlightened us much in regard to death and its appropriate feelings. Either pain or exhaustion usually causes, in such cases, an apathy which leaves nothing to be remembered or revealed. I was once told by a child, after some hours of exhausting pain, what she had overheard below,—that if some contingency, which she specified, did not arise, I should die before night. I fully believed it; and I felt nothing, unless it were some wonder at feeling nothing. Almost every person has a similar anecdote to tell; and there remains only the short and pregnant moral, that all preparations for leaving this life, and entering on the next,

should be made while the body is well and the spirit alive.

But how does death appear to those who rest half-way between it and life, or are very gradually passing over from the one to the other?

Much depends, of course, on how far the vital forces are impaired—on whether the condition be such as to obscure or to purify the spiritual vision. If we want to know the effect of nearness and realisation, and not the pathology of the case, we must suppose the vital powers to remain faithful, however they may be weakened.

In such cases, I imagine the views of death remain much what they were before, though they must necessarily become more interesting, and the conception of them more clear. I know of no case of any one who before believed, or took for granted, a future life, who began to disbelieve or doubt it through sickness. I have known cases of those who disbelieved it in health, seeing no reason to change their opinion on the approach of death,—being content to have lived—satisfied to leave life when its usefulness and pleasantness are gone—not desiring a renewal of it, but ready to awake again at the word of their Creator, if indeed



a further existence be in reserve for them. Such cases I have known: but none of a material change of views in the prospect of death.

To me, the presumption of the inextinguishable vitality of the spirit afforded by the experience of material decay, is the strongest I am acquainted with. No amount of evidence of any fact before the reason, no demonstration of any truth to the understanding, affords to me such a sense of certainty as the action of the spirit yields, with regard to its own immortality, at times when there can be no deception from animal spirits, or from immediate sympathy with other minds, or from what is called the natural desire for life. It is a mistake to say, as is frequently said, that, with regard to a future life, "the wish is father to the thought," always or generally. Long-suffering invalids can tell that there are seasons, neither few nor short, when the wishes are all the other way,—when life is so oppressive to the frame that the happiest news would be that we should soon be non-existent,—when, thankful as we are that our beloved friends, the departed and the remaining, are to live for evermore with God, and enjoy his universe and its intercourses, we should be

glad to decline it for ourselves, and to lie down in an eternal, unbroken rest. At these seasons, when, though we *know* all that can be said of renewed powers and relish, and a more elevated and privileged life beyond the grave, we cannot *feel* it; and, while admitting all such consolations as truth, we cannot enjoy them, but, as a mere matter of inclination, had rather resign our privileges;—in these seasons, when the wish would be father to an opposite thought, the belief in our immortality is at the strongest; the truth of our inability to die becomes overwhelming, and the sleep of the grave appears too light to satisfy our need of rest. I believe it to be owing to this natural and unconquerable belief in our immortality, that suicide is not more common than it is among sufferers. I am persuaded that the almost intolerable weariness of long sicknesses, unrelieved by occasional fits of severe pain, would impel many to put out a hand to the laudanum-bottle, in hours when religious considerations and emotions cannot operate through the indisposition of the frame, if it were not for the intense conviction that life would not thus be extinguished, nor even suspended. I do not believe much in the



“natural love of life,” which is usually said to be the preventive in such cases. I do believe in the vast operation of religious affections in withholding from the act: but I also believe in frequent instances of abstinence from death, from a mere despair of getting rid of life—a sense of necessary immortality.

I have spoken of the relief afforded by visitations of severe pain. These rally the vital forces, and dismiss the temptation, by substituting torture for weariness—at times a welcome change. The healthy are astonished at the good spirits of sufferers under tormenting complaints; and the most strait-laced preachers of fortitude and patience admit an occasional wonder that there is no suicide among that class of sufferers. The truth is, however, that the influence of acute pain, when only occasional, and not extremely protracted, is vivifying and cheering on the whole. The immediate anguish causes a temporary despair: but the reaction, when the pain departs, causes a relish of life such as the healthy and the gay hardly enjoy. Though a slow death by a torturing disease is a lot unspeakably awful to meet, and even to contemplate, there can be no question to the expe-

rienced, that illness in which severe pain sometimes occurs is less trying than some in which a different kind of suffering is not relieved by such a stimulus and its consequent sensations.

Thus much it is useful to know,—useful to the student of human nature, to the nurse, and to a sufferer under sentence of lasting disease. But instances have been known, perplexing to those inexperienced in pain, of devout thankfulness for the suffering itself, under its immediate and agonising pressure; and this in men far superior to the superstition of believing present pain the purchase-money of future ease,—the fine paid down here for admission to heavenly benefits hereafter.

Strange as this rejoicing in misery may appear, it is to some minds as natural and authorised by the laws of our being, as the joy which attends the acquisition of a great idea, or the verification of a potent truth. It is as verification that such pain is welcome. To men of the most spiritual tone of mind, every attestation of the reality of unseen objects is a boon of the highest order; and no such attestation can surpass in clearness that which is afforded by the sensible progress of decay



in the material part of the sufferer's frame. All attempt at description is here vain. Nothing but experience can convey a conception of the intense reality in which God appears supreme, Christ and his gospel divine, and holiness the one worthy aim and chief good, when our frame is refusing its offices, and we can lay hold on no immediate outward support and solace. It is conceivable to the healthy and happy, that, if waked up from sleep by a tremendous earthquake, the first recoil of terror might be followed by an intense perception of the fixity and tranquillity of the spiritual world, in immediate contact with the turbulence of the outward and lower scene. It is conceivable to us all that the drowning man may, as is recorded, see his whole life, in all its minute details, presented to him, as in clear vision, in one instant of time, as he lapses into death. Well,—something like both these experiences is that of extreme and dissolving pain, to a certain order of minds. The vision and the attestation are present, without the horrors caused, amidst an earthquake, by the misery of a perishing multitude, though at the cost of more bodily anguish than in the case of the drowning man. Though there may be keen

doubts in a modest sufferer how long such anguish can be decently endured,—whether the filial submission will hold out against torment,—there is through, above and beyond such doubts, so overpowering an impression of the vitality of the conscious part of us, and of the reality of the highest objects for which it was created and has lived,—so inexpressible a sense of the value of what we have prayed for, and of the evanescence of what we are losing,—that it is no wonder if the dying have been known to call for aid in their thanksgivings, and to struggle for sympathy even in their incommunicable convictions. If the shadows of the dark valley part, and disclose to such an one the regions that lie in the light of God's countenance, it is no wonder that he calls on those near him to look and see, though he is making the transit alone.

Those who speculate outside on the experience of the sick-room, are eager to know whether this solitary transit is often gone over in imagination, and whether with more or less relish and success than by those at ease and in full vigour. In my childhood, I attended, as an observer, one fine morning, at the funeral of a person with whom I was well



acquainted, without feeling any strong affection. I was somewhat moved by the solemnity, and by the tears of the family ; but the most powerful feeling of the day was excited when the evening closed in, gusty and rainy, and I thought of the form I knew so well, left alone in the cold and the darkness, while everybody else was warm and sheltered. I felt that, if I had been one of the family, I could not have neglectfully and selfishly gone to bed that night, but must have passed the hours till daylight by the grave. Every child has felt this : and every child longs to know whether a sick friend contemplates that first night in the cold grave, and whether the prospect excites any emotions.

Surely ;—we do contemplate it—frequently—eagerly. In the dark night, we picture the whole scene, under every condition the imagination can originate. By day, we hold up before our eyes that most wondrous piece of our worldly wealth—our own right-hand ; examine its curious texture and mechanism, and call up the image of its sure deadness and decay. And with what emotions ? Each must answer for himself. As for me, it is with mere curiosity, and without any concern

about the lonely, cold grave. I doubt whether any one's imagination rests there,—whether there is ever any panic about the darkness and the worm of the narrow house.

As for our real future home,—the scene where our living selves are to be,—how is it possible that we should not be often resorting thither in imagination, when it is to be our next excursion from our little abode of sickness and helplessness,—when it is so certain that we cannot be disappointed of it, however wearily long it may be before we go,—when all that has been best in our lives, our sabbaths, all sunset evenings and starry nights, all our reverence and love that are sanctified by death,—when all these things have always pointed to our future life and been associated with it, how is it possible that we should not be ever looking forward to it, now when our days are low and weary, and our pleasures few? The liability is to too great familiarity with the subject. When our words make children look abashed, and call a constraint over the manners of those we are conversing with, and cause even the most familiar eyes to be averted, we find ourselves reminded that the subject of a person's death is one usually



thought not easy to discuss with him. In our retirement, we are apt to forget, till expressly reminded, the importance of distinctions of rank and property in society, so nearly as they vanish in our survey of life, in comparison with moral differences ; and, in like manner, we have to recal an almost lost idea, that death is an awkward topic, except in the abstract, when our casual mention of a will, or of some transaction to follow our death, introduces an awe and constraint into conversation.

Such familiarity may be, and often is, condemned as presumptuous. There may be cases in which it is so ; but I think it would be hard to make the censure general. The confident reckoning on the joys of heaven for one's self, on any grounds, while others are supposed to be condemned to a contrary lot, is a superstition more offensive to my feelings than that which renders a trembling soul, clinging to life, aghast at the idea of meeting its Maker and Father. But a soul without any self-complacency, or ignorant confidence, may yet be easy and eager in the prospect of entering upon that awful new scene. Setting aside all the inducements from the hope of relief

and rest, the humblest spirit may be conceived of as tranquil and aspiring in full view of the transition; and this under a full sense of its sins and failures, and without reliance on any imaginary security,—without need of other reliance than its Father in Heaven. There may be—there is—in some, so continual a regard to God in life, that there cannot seem anything very new and strange in going anywhere where He is. There may be—and there is—in some, so earnest a desire to be purified from sin, that they would undergo anything on earth to be freed from it, and therefore fear nothing, but rather welcome any discipline which may be reserved beyond. Knowing that the revelation of the evil of their sin must be most painful, but also most necessary to their progress, they are ready, even eager for it, pressing forward to the suffering through which they hope to be made perfect. If with such dispositions is joined that ardent, reverential filial love which generates perfect trust, and rejects any interposition between itself and the benign countenance in whose light it lives, there may be nothing blameable or dangerous in the readiness for death, or in the happy familiarity with which the event may



be spoken of. It is a case in which every man should be slow to judge his neighbour, while the natural verdict of thoughtful observers would seem to be that a sufferer under irremediable illness, who preserves a general patience, cares for others' happiness more than for his own, and has always lived in view of an eternal life, can hardly be wrong in anticipating that life with ease and cheerfulness, whatever analysis or judgment dogmatists may make of his state of mind.

Whether our imaginings of Death are more or less a true anticipation of it, can be proved only by experience. It may be found that they are no more just than my idea of the matter when I was a child, when my brother and I dug a grave, and then lay down in it, by turns, and shut our eyes, to try what dying was like. Practically, such failures of conception cannot matter much. A person who is setting out on foreign travel for the first time, takes no harm by expecting the voyage and the landing among foreigners to be something very unlike what they prove. His preconceptions answered their purpose, by rendering him ready and willing to go, and preventing his being taken by surprise by the summons.

Still, those of us have greatly the advantage whose minds are enlarged by knowledge, and their imaginations animated and strengthened by exercise. Some of the most innocent and kind-hearted people I have known have been the most afraid of death,—not from consciousness of sin, but from dread of overpowering novelty—from a horror of feeling lost among scenes where there is nothing familiar ; while, in opposite cases, a philosophic interest and wonder have been known to go far in reconciling a highly intellectual man to leaving the companions he loved best in life.

There can be no question as to the difference in the ease of departure (moral conditions being supposed the same) of the housewife, whose days and faculties have been occupied with the market, the shop, and the home where her whole life has been passed, and the philosopher, whose nerves thrill with delight, unmixed with terror, at the very first view of the new wonders revealed by Lord Rosse's speculum. It is striking, that a man about to be thrust forth from life for a plot of murder on an enormous scale, should, while waiting for death the next moment, whisper to a fellow-sufferer, " Now we shall soon



know the great secret ;” while a pure and beneficent being, beloved by God and his neighbour, should pray to be loaded with any weight of years and sufferings rather than go from the familiar scene on which he has opened his eyes every day for sixty years. “ Grand secrets ” have no charms for him, but only horrors ; and as for new scenes, even within our own corner of the earth, mountains and waterfalls overpower him, and he shuffles back to shops and streets.

Let persons so constitutionally different be shut into a sick-room, knowing that they will issue from it only by death, and what will they do ? By the habit of looking forward to this exit for relief, the timid may come to speak and think of it as tranquilly as the speculative ; but then, when the sensation overtakes him, the difference is again apparent. It does seem as if there were in the seizure of death a sensation wholly peculiar, and which cannot be mistaken. Cases of unconsciousness are no evidence to the contrary ; and there are so many instances of decisive declaration by the dying, as to make the fact pretty certain. Then finally appears (supposing both conscious) the distinction in the act of dying, between the enlarged

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Of course, there is no waiting till the last moment for these differences to show themselves. Outside enquirers may be satisfied that invalids' anticipation of death varies with their habits of mind. Some merely anticipate; some contemplate. With some, the anticipation is merely of relief and rest; with others it is worthier of our human and Christian hope. In no case of permanent illness can I conceive the idea to be otherwise than familiar, under one aspect or another; so familiar, as that it is astonishing to us that we can obtain so little conversation upon it as a reality—a certainty in full view. To us this seems more extraordinary than it would be if the friends of Parry, and Franklin, or Back, were, as the season for a Polar expedition drew nigh, to talk to them about everything else, but be constrained and shy on that. I say “more extraordinary,” because it is not everybody that is bound, sooner or later, to the North Pole, but only a few crews; whereas, all have an interest in the passage of that other, that “narrow sea,” and in the “better country” which is its further shore.

Perhaps the familiarity of the idea of death is by nothing so much enhanced to us as by the

departure before us of those who have sympathised in our prospect. The close domestic interest thus imparted to that other life is such as I certainly never conceived of when in health, and such as I observe people in health do not conceive of now. It seems but the other day that I was receiving letters of sympathy and solace, and also of religious and philosophical investigation as to how life here and hereafter appeared to me ; letters which told of activity, of labours, and journeyings, which humbled me by a sense of idleness and uselessness, while *they* spoke of humbling feelings in regarding the privileges of my seclusion. All this is as if it were yesterday : and now, these correspondents have been gone for years. For years we have thought of them as knowing "the grand secret," as familiarized with those scenes we are for ever prying into, while I lie no wiser (in such a comparison) than when they endeavoured to learn somewhat of these matters from me. And besides these close and dear companions, what departures are continually taking place ! Every new year there are several — friends, acquaintance, or strangers—who shake their heads when I am mentioned, in friendly regret at another year



opening before me without prospect of health—who send me comforts or luxuries, or words of sympathy, amidst the pauses of their busy lives; and before another year comes round, they have dropped out of our world—have learned quickly far more than I can acquire by my leisure—and from being merely outside my little spot of life, have passed to above and beyond it. Little ones who speculated on me with awe—youthful ones who ministered to me with pity—busy and important persons, who gave a cordial but passing sigh to the lot of the idle and helpless; some of all these have outstripped me, and left me looking wistfully after them. Such incidents make the future at least as real and familiar to me as the outside world; and every permanent invalid will say the same: and we must not be wondered at if we speak of that great interest of ours oftener, and with more familiarity, than others use.

Neither should we be wondered at if we speak with a confidence which some cannot share, of meeting these our friends, and communing with them, when we ourselves depart. We have no power to doubt of this, if we believe at all that we shall live hereafter. I have said how intensely we

feel that our spiritual part is indestructible. We feel no less vividly that of that spiritual part the affections are the true vitality; that they are the soul within the soul—our inmost life. The affections cannot exist without their objects; and our congenial friends—the brethren of our soul—therefore survive as surely as God survives. If God is recognisable by the worshipper, and Christ by the Christian, the beloved are recognisable by those who love. To demur to this to the sufferer who (all other life being weakened and embittered) lives by the affections, divine and human, is, to him, much like doubting whether the atmosphere bears any relation to music, or the human understanding to truth.

If there are hours when, through pain and weakness, we would fain decline existence altogether, as a sick and wearied child frets at sunshine and music, and would rather sleep in darkness and silence, there is no moment in which we do not believe, as if we saw, that the departed righteous are in communion, full and active, in exact proportion as the ardour and fidelity of their mutual love deserves and necessitates. We believe this as if we saw it, whatever be our own



immediate mood, as, on every night of winter, however cloudy, we are well assured that the constellations are in the sky,—that Orion and the Wain have risen and are circling, steady, clear and serene, whatever be the state of the elements below them. As the life of the sick-room must necessarily be, whether its objects be high or low, one of faith and not of sight, those who visit it may easily perceive that it is not the appropriate field for demonstration. In its own province Demonstration is supreme. There let it dictate and pronounce. But we sufferers inhabit a separate region of human experience, where there is another and a prophetic oracle ; where the voice of Demonstration itself must be dumb before that of the steadfast, incommunicable assurance of the soul.

Here are some of the aspects of Death to the long-suffering Invalid.

## T E M P E R.

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“ We are not ourselves  
When nature, being oppressed, commands the mind  
To suffer with the body.”

SHAKSPERE.

“ Behold thy trophies within thee, not without thee. Lead thine own  
captivity captive, and be Cæsar unto thyself.”

SIR THOMAS BROWN.

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It is very surprising, and rather amusing, to invalids whose constitution and disease dispose them to other kinds of ill-temper rather than irritability, to perceive how this tendency, and no other, is set up as a test of temper by persons inexperienced in sickness. There are cases, and they are not few, where an invalid's freedom from irritability of temper is a merit of a very high order indeed: but there are many, — perhaps more, — where, to award praise on this ground, is like extolling the sick person for being worthy of trust with untold gold, or for his being never known to game or get drunk. This last, indeed, may, — amidst the sinkings of illness, with wine and laudanum in the closet, — often be actually the greater merit. It is a case in which every thing



depends on the existence of temptation. Persons suffering under frequent fever, or certain kinds of pain or nervous disturbance, or afflicted with ill-qualified nurses, may be pardoned for almost any degree of irritability, or may be unspeakably meritorious in resisting the tendency, with more or less steadiness. But there are some of us who cannot but smile at compliments on our freedom from irritability, when we feel that we never have the slightest inclination to be cross, nor have the least excuse for being so,—while we may be most abasingly aware of other kinds of frailty of temper.

To me it appears that we are, for the most part, in greater peril from other faults, because they are less looked for, less discussed and recognised, and we are, therefore, less put upon our guard against them : and also because their consequences are less immediately and obviously detrimental to our own comfort. Besides that all persons grow up on the look-out for irritability of temper, and therefore are more or less on the watch against it when they come to be ill, it is clear to the idlest and most selfish mind, that the whole hope of comfort in the sick-room depends on the freedom and cheer-

fulness of the intercourse held in it,—a freedom and cheerfulness forfeited by irritability on the part of the sufferer,—necessarily forfeited, even if he were tended by the hands of angels. Children are the brightest, if not the tenderest, angels of the sick-room; and the alternative between their coming springing in, not only voluntarily but eagerly, and their being brought, for observance' sake, with force and fear, is of itself inducement enough to self-control on the part of the most fretted patient, in the most feverish hour. Even in the middle of the night, when no one is by but the soundly sleeping nurse, the invalid feels admonished to suppress the slightest moan, when he sees in fancy his little friends the next morning either leaping from their beds at the joyful thought that they may visit him, or asking, with awe and gravity, whether they must go, and how soon they may come away. It is the sweetest of cordials to the heart of an invalid to learn, by chance, that children count the days and hours till they may come, and that all their gravity is about having to go away. It is the most refined flattery to let one know it: and the knowledge of it may well be almost a specific against ill-temper. And then



again, the nurse. It is by no means sufficient for one's comfort that one's nurse should be well qualified,—ever so trust-worthy, and ever so kind : it is necessary too that she should be free and happy. There must be no fear in her tread,—no reserve in her eye,—no management in her voice —no choice in her tidings. There is no ill-temper in that jealousy of the invalid's spirit which requires assurance of being no burden, and no restraint. It is a righteous jealousy, and among the most effectual safeguards against the indulgence of ill-humour. That there are disorders, and seasons of illness, which almost compel the forfeiture of the mental and moral freedom and ease of the sick-room, is a painful truth ; and those who suffer under such irresistible or unresisted irritation are supremely to be compassionated, whether their actual pain of body be more or less. But it is quite as certain that a large number of sufferers are exempt from temptation to this kind of failure, being subject, the while, to some other,—more tolerable, as affecting only, or chiefly, their own happiness.

The very opposite failure to that of irritability, —which shows itself in dissatisfaction with others,

—is no less common,—unreasonable dissatisfaction with one's self. This lowering, depraving tendency to self-contempt requires for its establishment as a fault of temper, long protraction or permanence of illness : but when once established, it is as serious a fault of temper as can be entertained. Where religious faith and trust are insufficient for the need, this temper is almost a necessary consequence of any degree of mental and moral activity in a sick prisoner. The retrospect of one's own life, from the stillness of the sick room, is unendurable to any considerate person, except in the light of the deepest religious humility ; and the strongest faith in the all-wise ordering of the moral world, is no more than sufficient to counteract that sickening which spreads from the distressed body to the anxious heart, when intervals of ease and lightness are few and brief. When to the pains and misgivings of such perpetual retrospect are added the burdens of a sense of present and permanent uselessness, and of overwhelming gratitude for services received from hour to hour,—there is no self-respect in the world that will, unaided, support cheerfulness and equanimity.



Without self-respect, there can be none of that healthy freedom of spirit which animates others to freedom, and exerts that influence which is ascribed to "a good temper," which removes hesitancy from the transaction of the daily business of life, and so permits life to appear in its natural aspect. Instead of this, where the spirit has lost its security of innocence, unconsciousness, or self-reliance, and become morbidly sensitive to failures and dangers,—where it has become cowardly in conscience, shrinking from all moral enterprise, and dreading moral injury from every occurrence, the temper of anxiety must spread from the sufferer to all about him, whether the causes of his trouble are intelligible to them or not. Moral progress, or even holding what he has gained, seems out of the question for one so shaken; for, constantly feeling, as he does, that he cannot afford to do the least questionable thing, and every act being questionable in one aspect or another, he can only preserve one incessant shrinking attitude before the fearful ghost of Conscience, instead of bestirring himself to prove and use his new opportunities of spiritual exertion and conquest. This abasement may co-exist with

the most perfect sweetness and gentleness of speech and manners, and the sufferer may enjoy great credit for not being irritable, when he is in a far lower moral state than often co-exists with irritability.

One effect, deplorably mean and perilous, of such a tendency, is immediately opposed to the mood which prompts hasty words and complaints. The sufferer's spirits rise in proportion to the pain he experiences. He is never so happy as when he feels his paroxysms coming on,—not only because pain of body acts as relief from the gnawing misery of his mind, but because every tangible proof that he is under chastening and discipline, conveys to him a sense of his dignity—reassures him, as a child of Providence. From this may follow too naturally his learning to regard pain as a qualification for ease—as a purchase-money of future good—a superstition as low and depraving as almost any the mind can entertain.

To persons in health, and at ease, this detail of the tempers of a sick-room may well appear fanciful, irrational, and shocking enough. But the time may come when they may recognise it as true; and, meanwhile, it will be their wisest



and kindest way to receive it with belief. It may possibly prove the key, even now, to a mystery which otherwise they can make nothing of, when they see one under tedious suffering, gentle but low when at ease—evidently borne down by speechless sadness—while, on the first return of pain, the spirits rise, and the more restless is the distressed body, the more at ease does the spirit appear. Such a state may be morbid and perilous; but, the more it is so, the more desirable it becomes that the attending friend should have an insight into the case, and a respectful and tender sympathy with it.

As to the remedy, it is easy to say that it is to be found in a cheerful trust in the Ordainer of our lot. While no one questions this, who can show how this trust is to be made available at every need, when the workings of the spirit are all confused, its vision impaired, and its powers distorted? The only advice that even experience can give in such an instance, is to revive healthy old associations, to occupy the morbid powers with objects from without, and to use the happiest rather than the lowest seasons for leading the mind to a consideration of its highest relations,

As the case is opposite to that most commonly discoursed of in connexion with the sick-room, so must a wise ministration be also opposite to common notions; the appeal must be, in seasons of ease and enjoyment, to the sense of dependence on God; and, in times of mental distress, to the principles of endurance and self-mastery.

Other tempers of the sick-room are more easily understood by those without. The particularity about trifles is one. This, though often reaching a point of absurdity, should be scrupulously indulged, because no one but the sufferer can be fully aware of the annoyance of want of order in so confined a space and range of objects. A healthy person, who can go everywhere at pleasure, leaving litters to be put away by servants during absence, can have no idea of the oppression felt by a feeble invalid, when looking round upon the confusion left in one little room by careless visitors,—chairs standing in all directions, books thrown down here and there, and work or papers strewed on the floor. It is easy to laugh at such trifles—easy to the invalid himself at times; but if any healthy person will recal his feelings during convalescence from any former illness, he will



remember the sort of painful sympathy with which he saw the servants going about their work—how his frame ached at hearing of a long walk, or even at seeing his friends sitting upright upon chairs. If he considers what it must be to have this set of feelings for life, he will think the particularity of the invalid not only worth indulging, but less absurd than in the eye of reason it appears; and if it be too much to expect of men, it may be hoped that women visiting the sick may be careful to leave the spaces of the room clear, not to shake the sofa or the table, to put up books upon their shelves, and leave all in such a state that the invalid may, immediately on being left alone, sink down to such rest as can be found.

No one challenges this particularity when it relates to hours. The most careless observer must know that it is illness of itself to a sick person to have to wait for food or medicines, or to be put off from regular sleep. Meantime, the invalid cannot keep too careful a watch upon the increase of his own particularity—his refuge in custom. There is something shocking to us invalids, when we fix our meditation upon this, in our attachments to our own comforts, and

cowardice about dispensing with them. I have myself observed, with inexpressible shame, that, with the newspaper in my hand, no details of the peril of empires, or of the starving miseries of thousands of my countrymen, could keep my eye from the watch before me, or detain my attention one second beyond the time when I might have my opiate. For two years, too, I wished and intended to dispense with my opiate for once, to try how much there was to bear, and how I should bear it: but I never did it, strong as was the shame of always yielding; and I have now long given up all thoughts of it. Moreover, though as fully convinced as ever of the moral evil and danger of being wedded to custom and habits, I have now a far too decided and satisfactory impression that the sick-room is not the place for a conquest of that kind, and that it is enough if the patient breaks through his trammels when he casts off his illness, and emerges again into the world, which is the same thing as acquiescing in the invalid for life being a life-long slave to custom and habit. Bad as this is, I do not see how it is to be helped; for the suffering and injury caused by irregularity of methods, and



uncertainty of arrangements in the sick-room, seem to show that freedom of this kind does not belong to an invalid life: and perhaps the most that ought to be required or desired of the sick person is, rather to welcome than complain of any necessary interruption to his ways, by a change of nurse, or other accidental interference with ordinary comforts,—not to extend his particularity beyond the bounds of his own little domain, and no more to expect the healthy and active to be, in their own homes, as strict and punctual as himself, than to desire the servants to leave off rubbing tables and lighting fires, because it makes his frame ache to think of such work. If he can preserve sympathy enough in the impulses of the active abroad, he may hope for indulgence in his particularity at home.

There are other liabilities which may be clear to observers, or easily conceivable when mentioned. I hardly know whether we may allude, under the head of Tempers, to the despair which I believe to be universally felt (however discountenanced), by all, on the assault of very severe pain. The reason may speak, and even through the lips, of hope and courage; but the *sensation* of which I

speaking is peculiar, so peculiarly connected with bodily agony, that I cannot but believe it felt wherever bodily agony is felt. It has nothing to do with the courage of the soul; affords not the shadow of contradiction to patience, fortitude, religious trust. I mean simply that when extreme pain seizes on us, down go our spirits, fathoms deep; and, though the soul may yet be submissive and even willing, the sickening question rises,—“How *shall* I bear this for five minutes? What *will* become of me?” And if the imagination stretches on to an hour, or hours, there is no word but *despair* which expresses the feeling. The by-standers can never fully understand this suffering; no, though they may themselves have suffered to extremity. The patient himself, in any interval, when devoutly ready to endure again, cannot understand, nor believe in his late emotion, or fancy that he can feel it again. As it is thus peculiar and transient, there could be no use in mentioning it, except for two possibilities; that some sufferer may, in the moment of anguish, remember that the sensation has been recognised and recorded; and that attendants, on witnessing a sudden abasement of high courage, on seeing



horror of countenance succeed a calm determination, may remember, at the right moment, that there is that passing within of which they can have no conception, and certainly no right to judge.

I might add, as a justification for allusion to so painful a subject, that it may teach us to honour, in some less faint degree, the strength of soul of those who, with any composure, die of sheer pain,—of the most torturing diseases. If, amidst successive shocks of this despairing sensation, their power of reaction, in the intervals, remains unimpaired, and they retain their spiritual dignities to the end, no degree of admiration can transcend their claims.

One strong peril to temper, in the case of a permanent invalid, I do not remember to have seen noticed, while, I am sure, none can be more worthy of being guarded against. By our being withdrawn from the disturbing bustles of life in the world; by our leisure for reading and contemplation of various sides of questions, and by our singular opportunities for quiet reflection, we must, almost necessarily, see further than we used to do, and further than many others do on subjects of interest, which involve general principles.

Through the post, we hold the best kind of correspondence with the society from which we are withdrawn; we have the opinions of the wise, and the impressions of the active, transmitted to us, stripped of much of the passion and prejudice in which they would have been presented in conversation. Instead of one newspaper or pamphlet, we now have time to look over several, and can hear all sides. Far removed from the little triumphs or disappointments of the day, which warp the judgments of all men who have hearts to feel, whatever may be their abstract wisdom; endowed with long night hours of wakefulness, when our spirit of Humanity is all alive; permitted sequestered days, when our review of historical periods may be continuous, and when some great new idea, a stalactite of long formation, at length descends to our level, and touches our heads, or a diamond of thought, slowly distilled, drops into our hand as we penetrate and explore;—when some such gain—the guerdon of our condition—is frequently occurring, it cannot be but that—unless we are fools, our judgments of things must be worth something more than formerly. If formerly we associated



with our equals, it cannot be but that we must now see further than they, on such questions of the time as interest us.

Such divergences of opinion as hence arise require care on the part both of sick and well, if a perfectly just and generous understanding is to be preserved between friends.

The liability of us sick is double. We are in danger of forgetting, amidst the inevitable consciousness of our own improved insight and foresight, that the activities of life have a corrective as well as a disturbing influence ; and that transient incidents and emotions which do not reach us, may form real elements of a great question for the week or the year, though lost in our abstract view of it. In this way, our judgment may involve great imperfections, which it behoves us to remember all the more, the less we can supply them. A worse liability is that to our tempers, of impatience at others not seeing so far as we do. There is something strange, disappointing and irritating, in finding those whom we have always regarded as sensible and clear-headed, holding some expectation which we see to be unreasonable, and offering to our consideration some fallacy or misty

notion, whose incorrectness is to us as distinct as a cloud in the sky. While religiously careful not to fret ourselves "because of evil doers," being so expressly desired, we are sadly prone to the far worse weakness of fretting ourselves because of mistaken thinkers. We long to send by a carrier-pigeon the answer or refutation which seems to us so clear: the post is too slow for us; and if we do not disburden our minds of their weight of wisdom, we are apt to spend the night in reiterating to ourselves our triumphant arguments, in the strongest and most condensed language we can find, till, exhausted by such efforts, at last the thought occurs to us whether truth cannot wait,—whether, supposing us ever so right intellectually, we are not morally wrong in our perturbation. This confession looks foolish and humbling enough in black and white; but I cannot escape making it, if, as I intend, I complain of some little injustice on the other hand, sustained by us.

Where such divergences of opinion arise, men of activity (and women, no less) are apt, whatever may be their abstract respect for closet speculators, and reverence for sequestered sufferers, to speak with regret, or at least with respectful com-



passion, of the warping influences of seclusion and illness, as particularly illustrated by the case in point. They attribute all differences to these causes, and never doubt that the old agreement would exist, by the invalid's views being the same as their own, but for the distorting medium through which the sick are compelled to regard events; or but for the influence which certain parties have obtained over his mind, by service or sympathy. This may be more or less true, in individual cases. Still, it is for the interests of truth and temper to remind the healthy and busy that the warp may possibly not be all on one side, and the enlightenment on the other; and that there may be influences in the life of the meditative invalid which may render his views more comprehensive, and his judgments more, rather than less, sound than heretofore. If there is any practicable test of this, it must be looked for in his habitual tone of mind and life. Unless this proves perversion or folly, his mind must, in justice, be held as at least as worthy of consideration as at any former season of his life. If his fundamental opinions have undergone no change, but rather enlargement with special modifications,

they are decidedly worthy of more respect than ever.

Thus does my experience moralize for both parties. If, in ordinary life, there is no peace of mind for those whose happiness depends on the good opinion of everybody, much less can there be tranquillity of mind in the sick-room for such. When we are in the world, our presence breaks down mistaken or slanderous allegations, and we are sure to be seen as we are, and to be rightly understood, by large numbers of persons,—by all, indeed, whose opinion is of value to us. But, while sequestered in the sick-room, we are, in point of reputation, wholly at the mercy of those who speak of us. It is true, most persons are so humane, and those about us are so touched by our affliction, as that the best construction is put on our manners and conduct by the greater number of reporters. But it is strange and fortunate if there be not, among our acquaintance, some intrusive person whom we have to keep at a distance,—some meddler whom we have to check, some well-meaning mischief-maker, of impenetrable complacency, who will most affectionately and compassionately report us as sadly changed, unable



to value our best friends, or to estimate the most important services. Whether charges like these arise, or old misrepresentations reappear, while we are invisible and defenceless, we may be miserable enough if we let such things trouble us. Those least in danger, as to temper, are persons of note, who have had former experience of the diversities of the world's opinion. They can smile and wait. But it may be easily conceived that such incidents may be trying to invalids who are the subjects of notoriety for the first time,—of that sort of notoriety which affliction creates, through the universal sympathy of human hearts. Under so new an experience, the sufferer may feel more vexation by the accidental knowledge of one unjust representation of his state of temper, than cheered by a hundred evidences of the esteem and sympathy of those about him. For the evil there is no help; but there are abundant resources against the vexation,—the same resources which enable the humble and hoping Christian, whether strong or weak, rich or poor in outward blessings, to go through good or evil report with a heart tranquil in Divine Trust, and occupied with human love.

## BECOMING INURED.

"Sunt homines qui cum patientiâ moriuntur: sunt autem quidam perfecti qui cum patientiâ vivunt."  
ST. AUGUSTIN.

"No cruel guard of diligent cares, that keep  
Crowned woes awake, as things too wise for sleep:  
But reverend discipline, religious fear,  
And soft obedience find sweet bidding here!

The self-remembering soul sweetly recovers  
Her kindred with the stars: not basely hovers  
Below—but meditates the immortal way  
Home to the source of light and intellectual day." CRASHAW.

WE hear, every day, benevolent and compassionate persons, in discussing the woes of sufferers, dwelling on the thought of such sufferers becoming inured; and we see them, if possible, reposing on this as the closing and conclusive idea. How natural this is! How often and how undoubtingly we did it ourselves, in our days of ease! But how differently it sounds now! How quickly do we detect in it the discharge and dismissal of uneasy sympathies! How infallibly do we see how far it may be true; and what a tale could we tell of what is included in the phrase, "becoming inured," where it may be most truly applied! of what



experience is involved in the process, where it is shortest and easiest!

I was lately speaking to a tender-hearted woman, who had known suffering, but not torment, of more than one case of persons who, dying slowly under a torturing disease, simply and naturally declared, shortly before death, the season of their illness to have been the happiest part of their lives. There are different ways of explaining this fact, which, though I always believed it, I did not till lately understand. My friend, however, found no difficulty. She said, in a tone of pitying tenderness, but of perfect decision, "O! they become inured to it." I replied by some slight description of the suffering in the case which had impressed me most, and asked if she thought use and experience could soften pain like that. "O yes," she again said, "they become inured to it. That is certainly the thing."

Is it so? I am persuaded it is not. To the great majority of evils men may become inured; but not to all. To almost every kind, and to vast degrees of privation, moral and physical, they may become inured; and to chronic sufferings of mind and body: but I am convinced that there is no

more possibility of becoming inured to acute agony of body than to paroxysms of remorse—the severest of moral pains. For the sake of both sufferers and sympathisers, it would be well that this should be thoroughly understood, that aid may not fall short, nor relief be looked for in the wrong direction.

The truth is, as all will declare who are subject to a frequently recurring pain, a familiar pain becomes more and more dreaded, instead of becoming lightly esteemed in proportion to its familiarity. The general sense of alarm which it probably occasioned when new, may have given way and disappeared before a knowledge of consequences, and a regular method of management or endurance; but the pain itself becomes more odious, more oppressive, more feared, in proportion to the accumulation of experience of weary hours, in proportion to the aggregate of painful associations which every visitation revives. When it is, moreover, considered that the suffering part of the body is, if not recovering, growing continually more diseased and susceptible of pain, it will appear how little truth there is in the supposition of tortured persons becoming inured to torture.

The inuring process which I hold to be



impossible in the cases mentioned is, however, practicable and frequent in almost all cases of inferior suffering. But, while all join in thanking God for this, there is a wide difference in the view taken of the fact by those who feel and those who only observe it. To the last, it is a clear and satisfactory truth, shining on the rock of futurity, which they can sit and gaze at from the window of their ease, commenting on the blessing of such a beacon-light to those who need it. To those who need it, meanwhile, it is far far off—sometimes hidden and sometimes despaired of, as the waves and the billows go over them, and the point can be reached only through sinkings and struggles, and fears and anguish, with scanty breathing-times between. Why is this not admitted in the case of the invalid as it is in that of the person losing a sense? One who is becoming blind or deaf is sure to grow inured in time; but through what a series of keen mortifications, of bitter privations! Every one sees and understands this; while in the case of the invalid, many spring to the conclusion, overlooking the process of discipline which has, in that case, as in the other, to be undergone. It should never be forgotten how different a thing it

is to read off this lesson from the clear print of assertion or observation, and to learn it experimentally, at a scarcely perceptible rate, "line upon line and precept upon precept;" when every line is burnt in by pain, and the long series of precepts are registered by their degrees of anguish.

When the nature of the process has been sufficiently dwelt upon to be understood—that the hearts of the happy may be duly softened, and those of the suffering duly cheered by sympathy—then let all good be said of the inuring process; at least all the good that is true; and that is much. No wise man will declare that it is the best and healthiest condition for any one. No wise man will deny that the healthiest moral condition is found where there is the most abundant happiness. Happiness is clearly the native, heavenly atmosphere of the soul—that in which it is "to live and move and have its being" hereafter, and in proportion to its share of which, now and here, it makes its heavenly growth. The divinest souls—the loftiest, most disinterested and devoted—all unite in one testimony, that they have been best when happiest; that they were then most energetic and spontaneously devoted—least self-conscious.



This must and may joyfully be granted. But, as the mystery of evil is all round about us, as we have no choice whether or not to suffer, we may be freely thankful next for the inuring process, as being the possible means, though inferior to happiness, of divine ends.

Far, indeed, does the sufferer feel from reaching those ends, when he contrasts his own state with that of the truly happy man. When he looks upon one so "little lower than the angels," on his frame, so nerved and graced by health, his eye emitting the glow of the soul, his voice uttering the music of the heart, his hand strong to effect his purposes, his head erect in the liberty of ease, his intellect and soul free from perplexities and cares, and not only at leisure for the service of others, but restless to impart to them of his own overflowing good; when the sufferer contemplates such a being, and contrasts him with himself, he may well feel how much he has to do, to approach this higher order of his race. Aware of his own internal tremblings at the touch of the familiar pain, sinking in weakness before the bare idea of enterprise, abashed by self-consciousness, smarting under tenderness of conscience, perplexed and

bewildered by the intricacy and vastness of human woe, of which his own suffering gives him too keen a sense, well may he who is in the bonds of pain look up humbly to him who walks gloriously in joy; and the humility might sink into abjectness if the matter ended here, if the inuring process were not at work. But herein is ample ground for hope now, and greatness in the future; and if a secondary, still a sufficient greatness.

The sufferer may well be satisfied, and needs be abashed before no mortal, if he obtains, sooner or later, the power to achieve divine ends through the experience of his lot. If, beginning by encountering his familiar pain, and putting down the dread of it by looking merely to the comfort of the reaction when it ceases, he attains at length to conquering pain by the power of ideas; if, ease of body being out of the question, he makes activity of spirit suffice him; if, his own future in this life being a blank, he becomes absorbed in that of other men; if, imprisoned by disease, kingdoms and races are not wide enough for his sympathies; if, as this or that sense is extinguished, or this or that limb is laid fast, his spirit becomes more alive in every faculty; if familiarity with



pain enables him so to deal with it, as resolutely to cut off every morbid spiritual growth to which he has been made liable by pain; if, instead of succumbing to unfavourable conditions, he has struggled against dwarfage and distortion, and diligently wrought at the renewal of the inward man, while the outward frame was decaying day by day, he may surmount his humiliations, whatever cause for humility may be left by so impaired an existence. For him the inuring process will have done its best.

For those who from constitutional irritability cannot become inured, there is, daily opening, and at shorter distance, the grave, where "the weary are at rest."

For those on whom the inuring process acts amiss,—petrifying instead of vivifying the soul, we may and must hope, on the ground that they are in the hands of one whose ways and thoughts are not ours, nor within our ken. They are a mystery to us, like the cankered buds and blighted blossoms of our gardens. Or it may be, that there is no corruption or decay, but only torpidity, induced by the protraction of their polar night of adversity. It may be, that their life is only hidden away for

a season, and that when the breath of the eternal spring shall dissolve their icy bonds, they may start forth as new-born, and their preceding deadness be mercifully counted to them but as a long dream.

There is no danger, no false security to one's-self, in hoping thus much for them ; for one must be as far from reconciling one's-self to their condition as from preferring dreams to contemplation, or the sleep of the frame to the life of the spirit.



## POWER OF IDEAS IN THE SICK-ROOM.

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“ Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope.”

ZECHARIAH.

“ Wherefore, for virtue's sake  
I can be well content  
The sweetest time in all my life  
To deem in thinking spent.”

LORD VAUX.

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IT is amusing (in a somewhat mournful way, however,) to sick people, to observe how children and other inexperienced persons believe, notwithstanding all explanation and assurance, that it must be a very pleasant thing to be ill—gently ill, so as not to be groaning with pain, or confined to bed. They derive an impression of comfort and luxury from what they see, which it is impossible to weaken by descriptions of suffering which they have never felt, and cannot conceive of. They see the warm room in winter, with its well-cushioned couch, and think how comfortable it must be never to have the toes frozen, or a shower of sleet driven in one's face. The fire in the chamber all night—the flowers and books that lie strewn about all day—the pictures on the walls

—the dainty meals—the punctual and careful attendance—these are things which make illness look extremely pleasant to the healthiest people, who are those that have the keenest relish for pleasure. Few of such are there who have that insight of sympathy which drew from my little friend at my elbow the sighing exclamation—“Ah! but there is the unhealthiness! that spoils everything!”

Even if the ordinary run of inexperienced persons could see the whole of our day, I should not expect them to understand the matter much better. If they saw us turn from the dainty meal, and wear a look of distress and fear, in the midst of everything that to them indicates comfort and security, I imagine that they could only wonder, till they knew for themselves how bodily distress excludes pleasure from outward objects, and how the mental weaknesses which prevail amidst an unnatural and difficult mode of life convert the most innocent and ordinary occurrences into occasions of apprehension, or of self-distrust or self-disgust.

If they must witness the painful and humbling aspect of the mode of life, it is much to be wished



that they might also see another fact belonging to it—to them, perhaps, no less mysterious than the misery; but not the less salutary for that, as it may teach them that there is much, both of good and evil, in our condition, which it will be wiser in them to observe than to judge of.

The benign mystery which I would have them witness is, the power of ideas over us. A child knows something of this in his own way. In war-time, little boys leave their pet plays to run about and tell everybody the news of a great battle. A child cannot eat the best dinner in the world on the day of first going to the play. The doll is thrown into a corner, when news comes of any acquaintance being burnt out in the middle of the night; or when anecdotes are telling of any old martyr who suffered heroically. In their own way, children are conscious, when reminded, of the power of ideas; but they cannot conceive of our way of experiencing the same force—to us so renovating! If it is at times surprising to the most enlightened and sympathising of our companions, it may well be astonishing to those in the early stages of observation.

They see, with a sort of awe, how priceless

are certain pictures to us, in comparison with all others. They hear us speak of the landscapes, the portraits, the graceful and beautiful images which adorn the walls; but they observe how, when restless and distressed, we steal a glance upwards at one picture, and find something there which seems to set us right—to rally us at once. If such a picture as the CHRISTUS CONSOLATOR of Scheffer be within view of the sick-couch—(that talisman, including the consolations of eighteen centuries!—that mysterious assemblage of the redeemed Captives and tranquillised Mourners of a whole Christendom!—that inspired epitome of suffering and solace!)—it may well be a cause of wonder, almost amounting to alarm, to those who, not having needed, have never felt its power. If there were now burnings or drownings for sorcery, that picture, and some who possess it, would soon be in the fire, or at the bottom of a pond. No mute operation of witchcraft, or its dread, could exceed the silent power of that picture over sufferers. Again—if the inexperienced chance to see us in an unfavourable hour, when our self-control cannot rise beyond constraint—when our words are fewest, however



gentle the voice—when our posture is rigid, because we will not be restless, and our faces tell the distress we think we are concealing; if, at such a time, the post comes in, how miraculous must seem the change to one who does not know what we have just read in letters or newspapers—and, perhaps, could not understand its efficacy, if he had seen. He sees us start up on the couch, hears us become voluble, and talk in a free and joyous tone;—beholds us eat and drink, without thinking what is put before us;—perhaps is surprised at a flow of tears, which seems to dissolve the misery, whatever it was; and finds, to his amazement, that all this is caused by something to him so dry as the appointment of a committee in the House—a speech on some hustings—an improved quarter's revenue;—or, perhaps, something not dry, but merely curious, and to him anything but moving,—a new appearance attending an eclipse—an arrangement for embanking the Nile, or cutting through the Isthmus of Panama, or some vast discovery in science or the arts. He may, again, see the relaxation yet more complete,—may perceive, without a word being spoken, that we are well

for the hour,—the eye swimming in happiness, the voice full of gentle joy; so that he is convinced that illness does not “spoil everything.” In this case, some comfort has come, too sacred to be told,—at least then; some news or appeal from the primary christians and confessors of our day,—the American abolitionists,—some opening to us for doing some little service,—or, as not seldom happens, some word of true sympathy which rouses our spirit, as the trumpet stirs the war-horse,—some sudden light showing our position on our pilgrim path,—some hint of our high calling,—some apt warning of a pregnant truth, administered by a wise and loving comforter.

If I were asked whether there is any one idea more potential than any other over every sort of suffering, in a mode of life like ours, most hearers of the question would make haste to answer for me that there is such a variety of potential ideas, suited to such wide differences of mood of mind and body, that it must be impossible to measure the strength of any one. Nevertheless, I should reply that there is one, to me more powerful at present than I can now conceive any single idea to have been in any former states of my mind. It is this;



that it matters infinitely less what we *do* than what we *are*. I can conceive the amazement of many at this announcement,—of many even who admit its truth, and feelingly admit it, as I myself did when it was first brought home to me from the printed page of one friend by the heart-breathing voice of another. I care not who wonders, and who only half understands, while there are some few to whom this thought may be what it is to me. No one will be so short-sighted as to apply it as an excuse for indolence in the active and healthy,—so clear is it that such cannot *be* what they ought to be, unless they *do* all they can. But perhaps it is only the practised in human sorrows who can see far enough into the boundless truth of this thought to appreciate its worth to us. Suffice it here that it *has* the power I ascribe to it, and that we whom it has consoled long to administer it when we see old age restless in its infirmity, activity disappointed of its scope or instruments, or the most useful agents of society, the most indispensable members of families paralysed by disease. We long to whisper it in the dungeons of Spielberg, where it opens a career within the narrowest recess of those thick walls. We long

to send a missive to every couch of the sick, to every arm-chair of the aged and the blind, reminding them that the great work of life is ours still,—through all modes of life but that of the madhouse,—the formation of a heavenly soul within us. If we cannot pursue a trade or a science, or keep house, or help the state, or write books, or earn our own bread or that of others, we can do the work to which all this is only subsidiary,—we can cherish a sweet and holy temper,—we can vindicate the supremacy of mind over body,—we can, in defiance of our liabilities, minister pleasure and hope to the gayest who come prepared to receive pain from the spectacle of our pain; we can, here as well as in heaven's courts hereafter, reveal the angel growing into its immortal aspect, which is the highest achievement we could propose to ourselves, or that grace from above could propose to us, if we had a free choice of all possible conditions of human life. If any doubt the worth of the thought, from the common habit of overlooking the importance of what is *done* in its character of index of what the agent *is*, let him resort at once to the fountain-head of spiritual exemplification, and say



whether it matters most what Christ was or what he did.

The worth of this particular thought is a separate consideration from that of the worth of any sound abstract idea to sufferers liable to a besetting personal recollection, or doubt, or care. But, before I speak of this, I must allude to a subject which causes inexpressible pain whenever it occurs to us sick prisoners. I have said how unavailing is luxury when the body is distressed and the spirit faint. At such times, and at all times, we cannot but be deeply grieved at the conception of the converse of our own state, at the thought of the multitude of poor suffering under privation, without the support and solace of great ideas. It is sad enough to think of them on a winter's night, aching with cold in every limb, and sunk as low as we in nerve and spirits, from their want of sufficient food. But this thought is supportable in cases where we may fairly hope that the greatest ideas are cheering them as we are cheered: that there is a mere set-off of their cold and hunger against our disease; and that we are alike inspired by spiritual vigour in the belief that our Father is with us,—that we are only encoun-

tering the probations of our pilgrimage,—that we have a divine work given us to carry out, now in pain and now in joy. There is comfort in the midst of the sadness and shame when we are thinking of the poor who can reflect and pray,—of the old woman who was once a punctual and eager attendant at church,—of the wasting child who was formerly a Sunday-scholar,—of the reduced gentleman or destitute student who retain the privilege of their humanity,—of “looking before and after.” But there is no mitigation of the horror when we think of the savage poor, who form so large a proportion of the hungerers,—when we conceive of them suffering the privation of all good things at once,—suffering under the aching cold, the sinking hunger, the shivering nakedness,—without the respite or solace afforded by one inspiring or beguiling idea.

I will not dwell on the reflection. A glimpse into this hell ought to suffice, (though we to whom imagery comes unbidden, and cannot be banished at will, have to bear much more than occasional glimpses;) a glimpse ought to suffice to set all to work to procure for every one of these sufferers, bread and warmth, if possible, and as soon as



possible; but above everything, and without the loss of an hour, an entrance upon their spiritual birthright. Every man, and every woman, however wise and tender appearing and designing to be, who for an hour helps to keep closed the entrance to the region of ideas,—who stands between sufferers and great thoughts, (which are the angels of consolation sent by God to all to whom he has given souls,) are, in so far, ministers of hell,—not themselves inflicting torment, but intercepting the influences which would assuage or overpower it. Let the plea be heard of us sufferers who know well the power of ideas,—our plea for the poor,—that, while we are contriving for all to be fed and cherished by food and fire, we may meanwhile kindle the immortal vitality within them, and give them that ethereal solace and sustenance which was meant to be shared by all, “without money and without price.”

It seems but just (if we may venture so to speak), that there should be the renovating power in ideas that I have described, for our worst sufferings arise from an unmitigated power of ideas in another sort. I am not qualified by experience to speak of severe continued bodily torment,

but all testimony seems to concur with all our experience, that there is no such instrument of torture as a besetting thought. The mere description of the suffering, given by those who know it, seems to have wrought upon the general mind, for a kind of shudder goes round when it is mentioned, though it can no more be conceived of by the gay and occupied, than the continual dropping of water on the head can be imagined by him whose transactions with the element consist in a plunge bath every morning. It is known, however, that herculean men have shrunk to shadows under the infliction, that it has reduced heroes to tremble at the whispering wind, or the striking of the clock, that it turns the raven-hair gray, lets down genius into idiocy, and starves the most vigorous life into an atrophy. How then are the sick to meet this woe, which comes upon them with force exactly proportioned to their weakness!

If every sick prisoner in our land were questioned, and could and would answer truly, I believe all would reply (all who have minds) that their worst pangs are in the soul. For the moment,—for the hour,—no agony is, I know, to



be compared with some pains of body ; but when the question is of months and years (including the seasons of delicious reaction from bodily pains), I am confident that the peculiar misery of our condition—subjection to a besetting thought—will be owned to absorb all others. Whether the thought relate to any intellectual matter, or whether it be self-abasement and self-weariness at the perpetually-recurring apparition of sins, follies, trifling old misadventures and misbehaviour, or whether some more serious cause of remorse, the tormenting and weakening effects are much alike ; the cold horror at waking up to the thought in the middle of the night, knowing that we shall sleep no more ; the misery of opening our eyes upon a new day, with the spell of the thought full upon us ; the dread of giving ourselves up to thinking, and yet the inability to read, while the enemy is hovering about the page ; the faint resolution, broken almost as surely as formed, not to speak of this trouble to our nearest and closest friend, and the ending in speaking of it, in our agony, to many besides. O ! there is no aching, no shooting or throbbing pain of fibre or nerve that can (taken with its alternations) compare in

misery with this ! Even the anticipation becomes in time the worst, though the bodily pain is known to be real and unavoidable, while the ideal one is clearly seen to be baseless, or enormously exaggerated. The close observer of a sick sufferer may see the drops stand on the forehead, and the quiver pass over the lip, at the bare thought of the certain return of a periodical pain ; but worse to endure is the sickening of the soul, at the certainty that at such an hour we shall be under the spiritual dominion of a haunting demon, the foe, as foolish as cruel, whom we defy now with our reason, but shall then succumb to in every faculty. Here is an ordeal for the proud ! yet it is not less fearful to the humble ; for the humble can no more dispense with self-respect than the proud.

Some may wonder at such a history of an unknown trouble,—some who, when anything harasses them, mount a horse, and gallop over the sea-sands or the race-course, or visit their friends or the theatre, or resort to music, or romp with children. Let them remember that we cannot do these things,—that the very weakness which subjects us to these troubles, forbids our escape from



them. We know, as well as they, that if once we could feel the open air upon our brows, our feet on the grass, our bodies in exercise and vigour, all would be well with us ; but, as we cannot use these remedies, the knowledge is of no immediate avail. If we can get to the window and look abroad, that is well, as far as it goes ; but we are most subject to our tyrant in the night, and in midwinter,—at times when we cannot look abroad ; and it may even happen, too, that the tyrant dims the sun at noon-day, and blots out the landscape, or renders us blind to it. What then is to be done ? We evade the misery, when we can, by stirring books, (the most objective that can be had), or by seeing what we can of the world by the telescope, or by resorting to some sweet familiar spring of poetry ; but this last expedient is impaired by the fear of mixing painful associations with pleasures too sacred and dear to be endangered. Or we defy the foe in reckless anguish, or we endure in silent patience.

But there is something far better to be done,—not always ; but still, not seldom. We can turn the forces of ideas against themselves—meet them with their own weapons. We can call in the

power of an idea to overcome the tyranny of another idea; and then we come off conquerors, and with a soul-felt joy.

It is a joy to recur, in memory or imagination, to any moral conflict, past or possible, in which all our faculties are needed, and wherein that force is at least conceived to be employed which must otherwise corrode us. But if any such enterprise actually presents itself—confronts us at the moment—how great is the blessing! It may bring toil and difficulty to ourselves, and doubt and blame from others; but if it be clear to ourselves, how keen is the sense of life it gives at some seasons, though it may overpower our weakness at others! It seems hard, when we are feeble and suffering, to have irksome labour to do, to have to oppose the wishes and feelings of some whom we love, and to arouse argument when our longing is for unbroken and lasting rest: but, if our duty be but clear to ourselves, (or for the most part clear, with doubts only in our most sickly hours,) what a new position we find ourselves in, permitted once more to take the offensive side against evil, in alternation with the weary perpetual defensive posture! Happy they, who



have been brought up in allegiance to Duty, more or less strict; and happiest they whose loyalty has been the strictest! In the hour of nature's feebleness, and apparent decay, they find themselves under the eye and hand of the Physician of souls, who has for them a cordial of heavenly virtue—of heavenly virtue for them, but of no virtue to such as have let their moral nature take its chance, and who, in their hour of extreme need, are no more capable of spiritual enterprise than of a bodily flight beyond the precincts of their pain. They must languish in self-corrosion; while they who happily find how Duty gives “power to the faint,” “mount up with wings as eagles.” With every emergency of singular or unpopular moral action, every occasion for saying with courage a true word, or advocating a neglected cause—with every opportunity, in short, of spiritual enterprise, they soar afresh, and their eyes kindle anew in the light of life.

But this kind of solace could not be,—nor any effectual kind,—but for the power of the master idea of our life. But for Him who “stirreth up the nest,” and whose spirit “taketh and beareth them up” sunwards on her wings, the flights of

these eagle spirits would utterly fail. But for the ideas inspired by Faith, there could be no enterprise, no true solace, no endurance but of the low, merely submissive kind. Great is the power of all thought, congenial with our nature, over disease of body and morbid tendencies of the mind ; but those which connect us with the Maker of our frame and the Ordainer of our lot are absolutely omnipotent. O ! let the speculative observer of human nature consider well, and observe that human nature to its extremest limits, before he pronounces that our spirits are not created filial. Let him ponder well the universal aspiration towards a spiritually-discerned parent, before he declares the affection a mere venerable superstition. Let him feel in health and full action,—(or, if he feels it not, let him detect in others,) the pausing horror of a sense of orphanhood, beneath which the moral universe falls in pieces under the hands of its myriad builders. Let him see in the sick-chamber, where the outward and inward world seem alike to the sufferer to be crumbling asunder, how irresistible is the conviction of an upholding power, new-modelling all decaying things, and imbuing them



with immortality. If he himself can but learn what protracted sickness is, let him ponder well whether a superstition, however early and solemnly conveyed and cherished, could stand the stress,—not merely of pain, but of the questionings prompted by pain. Let him say if it can be anything but truth,—absolute congeniality with our souls,—which can give such all-conquering power to the idea of our filial relation to the Ruler of all things.

No one will venture to say how this power is enhanced by the earliest associations. No one will presume to declare precisely how happy above others are they, now sufferers, whose infant speech was practised in prayer at a mother's knee, and who can now forget the dreariness of the night and the weight of the day in listening for the echoes of old psalmody, and reviving snatches of youthful hymns and religious reverie. No one will dare to say how far the sweet call to "the weary and heavy laden" is endeared by the voice of the Shepherd having gone before us over all the hills and vales of our life. But the true philosopher must, as it seems to me, be assured that the power of these spiritual appeals would ooze

away, in proportion as our faculties are weakened by disease, if they had not in them the divine force of truth to urge them home.

See what this force is, in comparison with others that are tendered for our solace ! One and another, and another, of our friends comes to us with an earnest pressing upon us of the “hope of relief,”—that talisman which looks so well till its virtues are tried ! They tell us of renewed health and activity,—of what it will be to enjoy ease again,—to be useful again,—to shake off our troubles and be as we once were. We sigh, and say it may be so ; but they see that we are neither roused nor soothed by it.

Then one speaks differently,—tells us we shall never be better,—that we shall continue for long years as we are, or shall sink into deeper disease and death ; adding, that pain and disturbance and death are indissolubly linked with the indestructible life of the soul, and supposing that we are willing to be conducted on in this eternal course by Him whose thoughts and ways are not as ours,—but whose tenderness . . . . Then how we burst in, and take up the word ! What have we not to say, from the abundance of our hearts, of that be-



nignity,—that transcendant wisdom,—our willingness,—our eagerness,—our sweet security,—till we are silenced by our unutterable joy !

Whence this imbecility of the “ hope of relief ? ”

Whence this power of the idea of God our Father ?

Do we know of anything stronger and higher than ideas ? In the strongest and highest,—(even an omnipotent and infinite) idea,—if we have not Truth, what is Truth ?

## SOME PERILS AND PAINS OF INVALIDISM.

“ But few that court retirement are aware  
Of half the toils they must encounter there.”

COWPER.

“ We are not to repine, but we may lawfully struggle.”

JOHNSON.

I DESIRE to notice, very briefly, some perils and pains of our condition,—briefly premising that, as only the initiated can fully sympathise, it will be sufficient, and therefore best, to indicate rather than expatiate.

We are in ever-growing danger of becoming too abstract,—of losing our sympathy with passing emotions,—and particularly with those shared by numbers. There was a time when we went to public worship with others,—to the theatre,—to public meetings ; when we were present at picnic parties and other festivals, and heard general conversation every day of our lives. Now, we are too apt to forget those times. The danger is, lest we should get to despise them, and to fancy ourselves superior to our former selves, because now we feel no social transports.



A lesser danger is that of fearing to experience emotions. If a barrel-organ makes itself heard from the street,—or a salute, on anniversaries, from the castle,—or a crowd gathers on the ridge to enjoy a regatta,—what a strange thrill comes over us ! What a shrinking from being moved ! How we wonder when we recal some discourse, whereby the voice of the preacher roused the souls of a multitude at once,—or when we awake within us the echoes of some Easter anthem, or of the Hallelujah Chorus in Westminster Abbey,—or when we image to ourselves a crowded theatre, when one tragic fear or horror bound together all the spirits that came for pleasure ! When we try to imagine a flow of talk in which minds uttered themselves without thought of individuals ;—when we revive these scenes of our former lives, we gasp for breath,—we wonder what we could have been made of to endure the excitement ;—we are certain that we should die on the spot if we encountered it now. It might be so : but we must remember that our present condition is the morbid one, and not the former. We must keep up our sympathies, as far as we may, by cherishing such festal feelings as may survive ; and ever

remembering that our grave, and solid, and abstract life is adapted to only a portion of our nature, and that our exclusion from spontaneous emotions, —from all experience of sympathetic transport,—is a heavy misfortune, under which it behoves us to humble ourselves.

Those of us are well off who have, like myself, the advantage of some outward symbol which serves as communication between them and the world. **FLAGS** are my resource of this kind. Little do those who hoist them imagine how a hidden invalid appropriates their signals! The Union Jack on the flag-staff, in the castle-yard, marks Sunday to me in a way I would not miss. When I look abroad on Sabbath mornings, it tells of rest and church-going ; and it is a matter of serious business with me to see it brought down at sunset,—a mute token in which there is more pathos than I could tell. And then the flags on the churches of the opposite shore on festal days tell me of a stirring holiday world,—make me hear again the Park and Tower guns,—show me fireworks and illuminations, and arouse something of the hum and buzz of a gay and moving crowd. Once more, the foreign flags hoisted by ships coming into



port,—mere signals for pilots in intention,—speak, unknown to any one, a world of things to me. I learned them long ago, by heart, and with my heart. When I see a foreign vessel come bounding towards the harbour, and perceive, the moment she hoists her flag, whether she has cut across from a Norway fiord, or has contested her way from the Levant, or found a path from the far Indies, or brings greetings from some familiar American port,—what a boon is that flag to me! Sometimes I point my telescope, to see the sailors' lips move in the utterance of a foreign tongue: at all events, I see in a moment the peaks of Sulitelma or of the Andes, or the summits of the Ghauts, or tropical sands, or chilly pine forests spread before me, or palmy West Indian groves. It is morally good, and unspeakably refreshing, to have some such instrumentality of signals with the world without, as these flags are to me.

There is a corresponding danger, though a less serious one, in such sympathy as we have making us repine. Though we may go on from month to month without one momentary wish that things were otherwise with us than as they are, yet, on occasion—once, perhaps, in a year—some incident

wakens a thrill of longing to be as we once were. Some notice of a concert, or a picture, brings up the associations of a London spring, with all its intellectual and social pleasures:—or the mere mention of a lane or hedge, at the moment the March sun is shining in, recalls the first hunting for violets in our days of long walks:—or a foreign post-mark in autumn transports us to Alpine passes or the shores of Italian lakes; and a sickly longing for scenes we shall see no more comes over us. But the reaction is so rapid and sure, that there is little moral peril in this—only the evanescent pain, which gives place to that act of acquiescence which has in it more joy than can be gathered from all the lanes, mountains, and shores of the globe.

The occasional sense of our being too weak for the ordinary incidents of life, is strangely distressing. The cry of an infant makes us wretched for hours after, in spite of every effort of reason. I saw, through my telescope, two big boys worrying a little one, and I could not look to see the end of it. They were so far off that there was nothing to be done. The distress to me was such—the picture of the lives of the three boys was



so vivid—that I felt as if I had no reason nor courage left. The same sort of distress recurred, but in a more moderate degree, when I saw a gentleman do a thing which I wish could dwell on his mind as it does upon mine. I saw, through the same telescope, a gentleman pick up from the grass, where children had been playing the moment before, under the walls of the fort, a gay harlequin—one of those toy-figures whose limbs jerk with a string. He carried it to his party, a lady and another gentleman, sitting on a bench at the top of the rocks, whose base the sea was washing. When he had shown off the jerkings of the toy sufficiently, he began to take aim with it, as if to see how far he could throw. “He never will,” thought I, “throw that toy into the sea, while there are stones lying all about within reach!” He did it! Away whirled harlequin through the air far into the sea below: and there was no appearance of any remonstrance on the part of his companions! I could not look again towards the grass, to see the misery of the little owner of the toy on finding it gone. There was no comfort in the air of genteel complacency with which the three gentry walked down from the

rocks, after this magnanimous deed. How glad should I be if this page should ever meet the eye of any one of them, and strike a late remorse into them! To me the incident brought back the passions of my childhood—the shock I have never got over to this hour—on reading that too torturing story of Miss Edgeworth's, about the footman, who “broke off all the bobbins, and put them in his pocket, rolled the weaving-pillow down the dirty lane, jumped up behind his lady's carriage, and was out of sight in an instant.” I think these must be the words, for they burnt themselves in upon my childish brain, and have stirred me with passion many a time since; as this harlequin adventure will ever do.

Many will wonder at all this—will despise such sensitiveness to trifles, considering what deeds are done every day in the world. They do not know the pains and penalties of sickness—that is all; and it may do them no harm to learn what they are, while my fellow-sufferers may find some comfort in an honest recognition of them.

This sensitiveness takes worse directions, however, and inflicts more misery still. It subjects some of us to a scrupulosity, particularly about



truth, which brings endless troubles. Every mistake of fact that we happen to know of afflicts us as if we were responsible for it,—and more than it ought if we were so responsible. We tend to an absurd restlessness to set everything right; and of course, above all, what concerns ourselves. If any kind friend pities us too much, and praises us for our patience under sufferings which he supposes to be greater than we are actually enduring, we remonstrate, and explain, as if his sympathy were not good for him and us, at any rate; and as if, having told only truth ourselves, it could matter much how our troubles are rated—whether over or under. We call up images of all who suffer far more than ourselves, and implore him to go and pity them—to honour them and not us. If he smiles and answers, well, he will go and pity and honour them—but he must be sorry for us, too—we smile, also, at our own scrupulosity, though we see in it only a new symptom of disease.

There is yet a worse direction taken by this sensitiveness—both morally and in experience worse. Though our observation of life encourages hope, on the whole, to a boundless extent, both as

to affairs and to human character, it teaches some truths about individual characters which are almost too much for our weakened condition. It may be absurd—it may be wrong—to be more afflicted about the faults and failings of the best and most beloved people, than about the vices and gross follies of a lower order of men ; but such affliction is, to us, quite inevitable. It is not wholly irrational ; for it is a melancholy sight to witness the encroachment of any bad habit of mind in those who should be outgrowing such bad habits, instead of being mastered by them. But we know it to be the common order of things that every man, even the best, carries about with him through life some fault or failing (the shadowy side of his brightest quality, if nothing worse), and that it is the rarest thing in the world to see any strong tendency overcome after the age of resolution, the youthful season of moral heroism, is past : yet, knowing this, it is not the less painful to witness it, with the clearness and strength with which the spectacle offers itself to us, on our post of observation. While working in the world, side by side with those whose doings we now contemplate, we were willing to be deceived in each particular instance ;



willing to expect that the judgment and action of those we loved and clung to would, in each case, be accordant with their best gifts and graces ; and, however often disappointed, we made allowance for the known frailty, and inconsistently hoped it would be better next time. We now see too clearly to be deceived. With the discernment of love, and the power of leisure, we can accurately calculate the allowance to be made—we can precisely measure the obliquity beforehand—and save ourselves at least from disappointment. But there is no solace in this. There is more pain in the proof of the permanent character of faults (permanence including inevitable growth), than in perpetual new evidence of their existence ; more sorrow in our prophetic power now than in our credulous weakness of old. The accurate readers of human character may be admired and envied for their infallible knowledge of how men will think and act ; but, if they have a true heart-love for those whom they watch, they cannot much enjoy their power. If they have not love, neither can they be happy ; so that it requires a penetrative knowledge indeed, into the ways of God as well as man, for such skill to be reconcileable with

peace and with our human affections. It is a burdensome knowledge for us to wield, in our weakened condition, and one which it requires an ever-strengthening faith to convert into a nourisher of love.

The faults I have alluded to are such only as are compatible with general sincerity—such as have a character of frailty. Those which include tendencies essentially low — untruth, double-dealing, and selfish policy—assume so disgusting an aspect, when tested by the trying light and amidst the solemn leisure of the sick-room, that it cannot be wrong to follow willingly the irresistible leadings of nature—to dismiss them with loathing, and invite to our arms the simple and heroic sincerity, and the cheerful devotedness to the honour of God and the interests of man, which here assume much of the radiance in which they come back in vision from beyond the grave. If it be true that our moral taste becomes more sensitive in our seclusion, I trust that such sensitiveness has not necessarily any fastidiousness in it, but that its relish of good grows in full proportion to its discipline. I trust that if its disgust deepens as the low and cowardly order of faults are stripped



to nakedness, so does its appreciation become more expanded and generous in regard to qualities which befit our heroic and aspiring nature and destination.

As for our best resource under the liabilities I have alluded to, a mere reference will suffice. "Whatsoever things are honest, pure, holy, lovely—to think on these things;" to fill our souls with conceptions of the god-like, so that our sensitiveness may turn in time to a keen apprehension of all that is in affinity with these; this is what we have to do—partly for present solace, and much more for the chance of converting our weakness into power—our mortal discipline into a heavenly habitude.

As for the ordinary and familiar sufferings and dangers of our state, the weariness of life which every one but the physician wonders at, often as it is witnessed; the longing for non-existence, which some pious people, who admit no bodily origin of any mental affection, are very much shocked at; the despair during protracted violent pain, which, however, being dumb, is seldom known at the moment—these cannot be illustrated, nor remedied, by anything that can be said on

paper. One can only suggest to the sufferer, and to wise nurses, that in the power of ideas we are furnished with an implement of natural magic which may possibly operate at the most hopeless times. It was in a sort of despair that the father of the lame child, inconsiderately led out too far, gave the boy his stick to ride home on ; whereupon the aching foot actually traversed the needful mile without being felt to ache. So the wise nurse may possibly find that a nobler idea than any hope of rest or relief may reanimate a spirit under a far severer pain. And assuredly there are some who could tell how, in the midst of anguish, the briefest suggestion of endurance, the slightest spiritual touch upon deep filial affections, has made a miraculous truce for them with torment and despair.

Observers of the sick think very seriously of their liability to become wedded to their own ways, and engrossed by their own occupations. The fact is as they see it ; but it would be happy for us if we had no worse mistakes to apprehend. Those of the sequestered who may re-enter the world will be pretty sure to fall in love with new ways and employments, and to feel a quite suffi-



cient disgust with their own. And if they are never to re-enter life, is it not well for them that they can spend some energies, which would otherwise be corrosive, upon outward things? If their souls are too narrow and purblind to live beyond the bounds of their abode, the best thing for them is to get through the rest of their time as easily as they can, in the way that suits them best. If they are of a higher order, their observers may be assured of two things—that their investment of energy on the ways and occupations of their singular and trying life, is no more than a needful absorption of a power which would otherwise destroy them; and also, that there is no fear of these things becoming indispensable to them or sufficient for them. There are hours, witnessed by no observers, when they find it wise to desist from their most esteemed employments, in condescension to their own weakness, and recognise in this discipline the lesson of the day. There are hours, witnessed by no observers, when the insufficiency of such objects is felt as keenly and pressingly as by the Missionary on his way to the heathen, or the Prime Minister with the interests of nations in the balance before his eyes—or by

the drowning man before whose soul life lies pictured in the instant of time which remains to him. This liability, though real, is insignificant and transient, compared with many others.

There is a safeguard against it, too, in our own weakness. There is even, for some, a danger of growing absolutely idle, from a sense of the littleness of what they can do. Formerly they acted on the rule—"not a day without a line," and now, thrown out of their habit by the absolute incapacity of some days, and disheartened by the small show made by their utmost rational diligence, they give up, and do nothing,—or nothing with regularity. This is a fearful danger. Nowhere are habits of regular employment more necessary than in such a life as ours; and, if we cannot preserve the absolute erectness of rationality,—if we must lean to the error of particularity or of indifference—I have no doubt of the former being the safer of the two;—the least injurious, and the most curable under a change of influences.

One of our most humbling and trying liabilities I do not remember to have seen mentioned anywhere, though it is so common and so deeply felt, that I have no doubt of a response from every



sick prisoner (of a considerate mind), whose eye will fall upon this page. I mean our unfitness for doubtful moral enterprise. For *doubtful* moral enterprise, let it be observed. Where the case is clear, where the right appears to our own eyes to be all on one side, whatever may be on the other, moral enterprise becomes our best medicine ; it becomes health and new life to us, as I have elsewhere said, be the responsibility and the immediate consequences to ourselves what they may. But when the case is not so clear, when we are pressed (as all conscientious people, sick or well, strong or feeble, are at times) by antagonist considerations of duty, we cannot, as in our vigorous days, take a part in some clear hour, and strengthen ourselves to bear recurring doubts, and to take cheerfully even conviction of mistake, if experience should prove our conscientious decision to have been unsound. We are not in a condition to bear recurring doubts, or to take cheerfully a conviction of moral mistake. Our duty, in our depressed circumstances, is to avoid such moral disturbance as we have not force to quell. We must, in submission and compassion to our own weakness, evade a decision if we honestly can ; and if we

cannot, we must accept of help—human help—and proceed upon the opinion of the soundest and most enlightened mind we can appeal to.

If there are any who lift the eyebrows, and shrug the shoulders at the supposition of this case, and declare that there is infallible direction to be found, in all particular cases, in the principles of religion, in answer to prayer, in the guidance of clergy, or the general opinion of mankind, I warn such that they will discover, sooner or later, that there is yet something for them to learn of morals, of the human mind, and of God's discipline of humanity.

There is no point of which I am more sure than that it is unwise in sick people to keep a diary. Some suppose this task to be one of the duties of the sick-room; whereas I am confident that it is one of the most dangerous of snares. The traveller, moving from scene to scene in high health and spirits, keeps a diary; he looks at it a few years after, and can scarcely believe his own eyes when he sees how many entries there are of his hunger, thirst, and sleepiness. He searches anxiously for a record of some fact, important to the determination of a truth in science—some fact



of which he has a vague impression; he cannot find it, but finds in its stead that he was chilly on that morning, or went to bed hungry that night. If it be so in his case, how should the journal of a sick-room avoid becoming a register of the changes of a morbid state? Not only this; but it can scarcely contain anything better. The experiencing and recording instruments themselves, the mind and body, are in a morbid condition, and cannot be trusted to perceive and record faithfully. Moreover, our tendency is, at the best, to an intense and growing self-consciousness, and our efforts should, therefore, be directed to having our minds called out of themselves—to causing our days to pass away as little marked as possible. A diary of public events, a register of books read, or of the opinions of those whose opinions are valuable on the great questions of the time, may be more or less amusing and profitable to keep; but then the rule should be absolute to exclude all mention of ourselves: and my own belief is, that it is wisest to avoid the temptation altogether—to keep clear of all bondage to ourselves and to habit that can be declined.

I was unutterably moved, lately, by the reading of a diary, preserved in MS., of one of the most innocent, holy, and devoted of God's human children; a creature who entered upon life endowed with good gifts, spiritual, intellectual, and external, and who wasted away in body, dwindled away in mind, and sank early to the grave, clearly through the force given by superstition to a corroding self-consciousness, to which she was by constitution liable. Her diary yields clear lessons which might profitably be made known, but that they are not apparently recognised by those who had the charge of herself in life, and hold her papers now. Among these lessons, one is to our present purpose. Her diary became more and more a register of frames and feelings, each mood of which was fearfully important to herself as a token of God's dispositions towards her. To an eye which now reads the whole at once, side by side with the dates and incidents of her life, nothing can be clearer than that the risings and fallings of her spiritual state exactly corresponded with the condition of her health. In one portion, the record becomes almost too painful to be borne. While her days were passed in heavenly deeds, and her



solitude in prayer, she sinks daily lower and lower in hope and cheer: and at last, after a record of most mournful humiliation, we find a notice which explains all—of the breaking of a blood-vessel. To us it is nothing strange to experience fluctuations of more than spirits—of heart and soul, and to ascertain, after a time, that they were owing to physical causes. We even anticipate these changes, and know that when we awake in the morning, we shall be harassed by such and such a thought; that at such an hour of the day we shall suffer under remorse for such and such an old act and word, or under fear of the consequences of conduct which, at other seasons, we know to be right. We have that to tell of ourselves, which seems as a key to the mournful diary I have mentioned. This experience, and such warnings as that which has so deeply moved me, should teach us the wisdom and duty of not cherishing—by recording—our personal cares, but rather of “casting them upon Him who careth for us.” The most fitting sick-room aspiration is to attain to a trusting carelessness as to what becomes of our poor dear selves, while we become more and more engrossed by

the vast interests which our Father is conducting within our view, from the birdie which builds under our eaves, to the gradual gathering of the nations towards the fold of Christ, on the everlasting hills.



## SOME GAINS AND SWEETS OF INVALIDISM.

“ God Almighty !

There is a soul of goodness in things evil,  
Would men observingly distil it out ! ”

SHAKSPERE,

“ Yet have they special pleasures, even mirth,  
By those undreamt of who have only trod  
Life's valley smooth ; and if the rolling earth  
To their nice ear have many a painful tone,  
They know man does not live by joy alone,  
But by the presence of the power of God.”

MILNES.

“ But here we are ;—that is a great fact ; and, if we tarry a little, we may come to learn that here is best. See to it only that thyself is here ; and art and nature, hope and dread, friends, angels, and the Supreme Being, shall not be absent from the chamber where thou sittest.”

EMERSON.

It is harder to be brief about our gains and privileges than about our peculiar troubles : but I must try to be so ; for the discoveries we make, though to us all glowing with freshness and beauty, are, to those who merely receive them, as trite as any old moralities whatever.

One great and strange blessing to us is, the abolition of the future—of our own future in this life.

It is commonly thought a chief privilege of childhood, that it is passed without thought of the future—that the present is all in all. I doubt

the truth of this. My own experience in childhood was of a painful and incessant longing for the future—a longing which enhanced all its innumerable pains, and embittered many of its pleasures—a longing for strength of body and of mind, for independence of action—for an escape, in short, from the conditions of childhood. The privilege which I then missed I have found now. Let it be a comfort to all sorrowing friends of those who are under any sort of doom without an assigned period to know, that in such cases the sense of doom vanishes. When the future becomes a blank to us, it becomes presently invisible. And when we sustain this change we do not contract in our desires and interests, but, I humbly hope, the contrary. The thoughts which stretched forwards, with eagerness and anxiety, now spread themselves abroad, more calmly and with more disinterestedness. There is danger of our losing sympathy with the young, the healthy, the ambitious ; for we soon require to be reminded of those states of mind, and those classes of interests which involve ambition, or any kind of personal regard to the future : but, if we can preserve these sympathies, it does appear to me that the change



is, to ourselves, pure gain. The image of five, ten, twenty years of our present life, or decline into deeper suffering, ending in death, makes absolutely no impression upon us. We have not the slightest movement of a wish that it were otherwise;—we do not turn our heads half round to see if there be no way of escape: and this is because our interests are all occupied with immediate and pressing objects, in which we have ascertained our true life to consist. Of these objects we would not surrender one for the permission to go back to the most brilliant point of our lives. Wealth would be a trouble to us—a responsibility we would rather decline; and it is astonishing to us that any man can wish for more than is needed to furnish his children well for the probation of life. Ambition and its objects (of course, not including usefulness) appear to us so much voluntarily incurred bondage and fatigue. Subjection to the opinions of men—a dependence on their suffrages for any heartfelt object—seems a slavery so humbling and so unnecessary, that we could hardly wonder sufficiently at it, but for the recollection that all human desires and passions are the instruments by which the work of the race

is done, and that ambition is far from being among the lowest of these instruments. Those of us who had known formerly, for a sufficient length of time, what it was to have fame, did not need to be laid by to discover how soon and how thoroughly it becomes disregarded (except for its collateral privileges), and left behind among our forgotten objects of desire: but our present position is the best for following out its true history—for tracing that path a reach beyond the point where moralists commonly leave it. The young aspirant is warned betimes, without practical effect, that the privileges of obscurity are irrecoverable: that, when he has become famous, he may long in vain for the quiet shelter of privacy that he has left. He feels this, with a sense of panic, when he has gained the celebrity he longs for, and is undergoing his first agonies from adverse opinion. If he would but believe us, we watchers could tell him that, though he can never retreat into his original privacy, there is a yet more complete shelter before him, if he does not linger, or take up his rest short of his journey's end. This shelter is not to be found in indifference, in contempt for human opinion—that ugly mask behind which some strive



to hide the workings of an agonised countenance, while the scorchings of scorn beat fiercely on their brains, and the jeerings of ridicule torture their ears. There is no rest, no shelter, in contempt: and human opinion can never be naturally despised, though it has no claim to any man's allegiance. The true and welcome ultimate shelter of the celebrated is in great interests—great objects. If they use the power their fame puts into their hands for the furtherance of any of the great ends for which Providence is operating, they find themselves by degrees in possession once more of the external freedom, the internal quiet, the genuine privacy of soul, which they believed forfeited for ever, while the consciousness of the gaze of the world was upon them. They read what is said of themselves in print just as if it was said of any other person, if it be laudatory; and with a quieter feeling still if it be adverse, as I shall presently describe.

It is sometimes said, that it is a pity when great men do not happen to die on the completion of the one grand achievement of their lives, instead of taming down the effect by living on afterwards like common men;—that Clarkson should have

died on the abolition of the slave-trade,—Howard after his first or second journey,—Scott on the publication of his best romance,—and so on. But there is a melo-dramatic air about such a wish, which appears childish to moral speculators. We are glad to have Clarkson still, to honour freshly in his old age. We see more glory about the head of John Quincy Adams contending, as a Representative in Congress, for popular rights, than he ever wore as President of the United States. We should be glad that Rowland Hill should live and work as a common man for a quarter of a century after the complete realisation of his magnificent boon to society. In truth, we behold great men entering early upon their heaven, when we see them tranquilly retired, or engaged in common labours, after their most memorable task is accomplished. The worthiest of celebrated men would, I believe, be found, if their meditations could be read, anticipating with the highest satisfaction, as the happiest part of their prospect beyond the grave, their finding a level condition once more—being encompassed by equals—or, as the popular preacher puts it, starting fair from the new post. Such being



the natural desire of simple hearts, there is a pleasure to spectators in seeing them, while still here, encompassed with fellowship—not set above, nor apart, though enjoying the natural recompenses of their deeds.

The words “natural recompenses” remind me of another gain conferred on us by our condition—scarcely separable, perhaps, from those I have mentioned—from the extinction of all concern about our future in this world, and the ordinary objects of pursuit; but yet to us so conspicuous, so heartfelt, as to demand record as a blessing by itself. I mean the conviction of the hollowness of all talk of *reward* for conduct;—the conviction of the essential blessedness of goodness. What can appear more trite? Where is the church or chapel in which it is not preached every Sunday? Yet we, who heard and believed through all the Sundays and week-days of many years, seem but now to have *known* this truth. Our knowledge is now tested by the indifference with which we behold men struggling for other objects, under a sort of insanity, as it appears to us, while the interests which animate us to sympathy are those of the pure in heart, seeing

God before they die ; and the dread which chills our souls is for the multitude who live in passion and die in moral insensibility. To us it appears so obviously the supreme good to have a healthy soul serenely reposing in innocence, and spontaneously working for God and man, that all divergence of aims from this end seems madness, and all imagery of rewards for moral desert the most profane of mockeries. It is a matter of wonder to us, that we ever conceived of royalty otherwise than as a title to compassion ; of hereditary honours, as desirable ; of fame, as an end ; and we are apt to wonder at others, in their turn, that they do not perceive the most blessed of our race to be the moral reformers of each age, passing "from strength to strength," although wearing out in their enterprise, and the placid well-doers, whether high or lowly in their service. The appendages themselves of such a state—the esteem, honour, and love which wait upon moral desert—almost vanish from our notice when we are contemplating the infinite blessedness of the peace of a holy heart.

Then we have (not to dwell on a matter already spoken of) a peculiar privilege in the peculiar



loveliness which the image of Death assumes to us. In our long leisure, all sweet and soothing associations of rest,—of relief from anxiety and wearing thought,—of re-entrance upon society,—(a society how sanctified!)—of the realisation of our best conceptions of what is holy, noble, and perfect,—all affections, all aspirations gather round the idea of Death, till it recurs at all our best moments, and becomes an abiding thought of peace and joy. When we hear or read of the departure of any one we knew,—of the death even of the youngest or the most active,—a throb of congratulatory feeling is our first emotion, rather than the shock which we used to experience, and which we now see sustained by those around us. Reflection, or tidings of survivors may change our view; but so does the image of Death become naturally endeared to us, that our first spontaneous thought is of favour to those who are selected for it. I am not recommending this impression as rational, but intimating it as characteristic of a peculiar condition. It is no slight privilege, however, to have that great idea which necessarily confronts every one of us all clothed with loveliness instead of horror, or mere mystery. Till now, we never

knew how any anticipation may be incessantly filling with sweetness.

It may be doubted whether there is a more heartfelt peace experienced at any point of our moral progress than in the right reception of calumnious injury. In the immediate return from the first recoil into the mood of forgiveness, there is something heavenly even to the novice. In the compassion for one's calumniator there is pain; and it is a pain which increases with experience of life, and with our insight into the peril and misery of an unjust and malicious habit of mind; but in the act of pitying forgiveness, there is a solace so sweet as to make one wonder how long men will be in adopting this remedy for their injuries. Any one who has been ambitious, and with success, will, if he be wise, be ready to declare that not the first breath of fame was to him so sweet as the first emotions of forgiveness, the first stirrings of the love of enemies, after his earliest experience of the calumny by which all public effort is sure to be assailed. I am not supposing cowardly acquiescence in insult and injury. I am supposing the due self-assertion made, or defence found not to be practicable. This is all that others have to



do with. A man's self-communion on the matter is his own private affair : and little know the systematic calumniators, who for party's or prejudice's sake, assail those who can only return silence, how they really work in some hearts they seek to wound. In some they may excite rage or bitter anguish ; but there are others,—probably many,—in which they cause no severer pain than a pitying sorrow for themselves, while they kindle a glow of courage, patience, and benignity,—they cause a more exquisite mingling of sweet emotions,—than were ever aroused by praise. The more defenceless the injured, the more private and the more heavenly are these passages of his soul ; and none are more defenceless than sick prisoners. If subject to such injuries in the world, where they could by their presence perpetually live down false aspersions, (aspersions on their opinions as well as on their conduct,) helpless indeed are they when living out of sight, dumb in regard to society and through the press. Then, if their party foes take the opportunity to assail and misrepresent their opinions and their acts, those foes can have all their own way abroad in the world ; but the very air of our sick-room turns

them from foes into best friends. After one moment's sickening at the poor malice and cowardice, our thoughts fix on the high and holy truths to which they direct us,—on the transience of error,—the nothingness of fame, in the serious passages of life,—the powerlessness of assaults from without while we possess ourselves,—till we end in a calm and sweet mood of contentedness for ourselves and affectionate intercession for the victims of angry passion or of sordid interests. It does not move us painfully to think of our helplessness,—to contemplate leaving life without explaining our opinions, or justifying our views and enterprises. What is just and true will abide and prevail; and as for our claims to a share in the reputation, they seem in the sick-room worthy of only a smile. If we wrought for reputation, we must suffer, sooner or later, for the lowness of the aim; and now may be our time for taking a new growth through pain. But if we wrought for truth and good, we are not susceptible of the venom of the party slanderer. His sting proves no sting, but a beneficial touch rousing in us many tender, and resolute, and benignant feelings. These may be awakened wherever such a touch



reaches us ; but nowhere perhaps so sensibly as in the privacy and lowliness of the sick-room. I need say nothing of the benefit brought to us, by the same act, in the sympathy of generous minds. Of the blessing of sympathy I have already said so much that I dare scarcely approach the subject again. And never, as all know, does ministering affection so abound as towards the injured. When injury and helplessness unite their claims, there is no end to the multitude of hearts that throng to defend and aid. They are far more than are needed ; for few—extremely few—are those who venture or who like to send the enmity of public life into the retreats of privacy. Very rare, I believe, is the species of men who insult when all the world knows there can be no reply. Still, such cases are witnessed ; and of their operation I have spoken.

The greater number of invalids are under no such liability ; but all may be subject to some injustice,—some misrepresentation which may reach their knowledge ; and their emotions, both of recoil and of renovation, may be like in kind, and even equal in degree, to those I have intimated. If occasions for forgiveness should arise,—

(and to whom do they not?)—may its relish be as sweet to them as it assuredly is to some more extensively tried!

An inestimable gain from the longest sickness is the outgrowth of the scruples and other conflicts which constitute the chief evil of merely long sickness. Of some perils and pains of our condition I have spoken, and I must therefore declare that there is a remedial influence in the very infirmity which appeared to create them. If it be but continued long enough,—if the struggle be not broken off before it is fairly exhausted,—victory will declare itself on the side of peace. We may be long in passing through the experience of weakness, humiliation and submission; but up, through acquiescence, we must rise, sooner or later,—true things separating themselves infallibly from the transient, and all that is important revealing itself in its due proportions, till our vision is cleared and our hearts are at rest. If the invalid of five years can smile at some of the anxieties and scrupulosities of his first season of retreat, much more clear-sighted must the ten years' thinker be in regard to the snares and troubles of his early or midway term. If, amidst



the gain, as little as possible be lost, the privileges of our state may be such,—not as, indeed, to compare with those of health and a natural mode of life,—but as may satisfy a humble and rational hope that our season of probation is not lost, nor materially wasted.

The sick-room is a sanctuary of confidence. It is a natural confessional, where the spontaneous revelations are perhaps as ample as any enforced disclosures from disciple to priest, and without any of the mischiefs of enforcement. We may be excluded from much observation of the outer life of men; but of the inner life, which originates and interprets the outer, it is scarcely possible that in any other circumstances we could have known so much. Into what depths of opinion are we not let down! To what soaring heights of speculation are we not borne up! What is there of joy or sorrow, of mystery and marvel, in human experience that is not communicated to us! And all this not as if read in print,—not half-revealed, in the form of hints to such as can understand,—not in general terms, as addressed to the general,—but spoken fully and freely, with that particu-

larity which fastens words upon the soul for ever,—with those living tones of emotion which make the hearer a partner in all that is and has been felt. Here, we learn that the whole experience of humanity may be contained in one bosom, through such participation as we ourselves entertain; and even that all opinions, the most various and the most incompatible, may be deposited in one intellect, for gradual review, without inducing scepticism, and possibly to the strengthening of the powers and privileges of Faith.

Göthe, the seer of humanity, formed in himself the habit of agreeing with all the opinions uttered to him, alleging as his ground that there is always a sense in which everything is true, and that it is a good to encourage, and an evil to discourage, any belief arrived at in natural course. There are men with minds of a far lower order, but still somewhat superior to the average, who do precisely the reverse,—they see far enough to be aware that there is always something to be said to the contrary of what they hear uttered; and they cannot help saying it. They fall into a habit of invariable opposition, justifying the practice to themselves by the plea of impartiality,



—of resistance to dogmatism,—of love of truth, and the like. I disapprove of both habits. Both practically injure belief, and damage the interests of truth. The natural operation of Göthe's method was to encourage in many indolence in the pursuit of truth and carelessness about opinions ;—in some, doubts of the very existence of truth ; and in all reflective persons, a keen sense of the insult conveyed, however unintentionally, by such treatment. Far worse, however, is the influence of the antagonist order of minds,—not only from their comparative numbers, for there is not a Göthe in five hundred years,—but from the direct operation of their method and their example. A man who forms a habit of intellectual antagonism destroys more than can ever be repaired, both in his own mind and in those which he influences. He allows no rest in any supposition even to those who have not power or leisure to follow out the research. He cuts their own ground from under them, and does not establish them on any other, for he himself appears to be established on none. Men of this order are, above all others, fickle in their opinions. Complacently supposing themselves impartial investigators into truth, they are,

in fact, the sport of any one who, discerning and playing with their weakness, can put them up to the assertion and defence of any opinions whatever, and lead them into daily self-contradiction. What ensues is seen at a glance:—they tamper with truth till the structure of their own intellect becomes fatally impaired:—they denounce, as bigots, all men of every order of mind who remain steady in any opinions, and especially such as continue to hold opinions which they have themselves quitted:—they never doubt of their own fluctuations being progression, and that they are leaving all stable believers behind:—they learn no caution in the publication of their so-called opinions from their own incessant changes, but rather pique themselves on their eagerness to exhibit and insist upon each new view, and enjoy the occasion it affords for complacent amazement at all who hold the positions which they have themselves abandoned.

It may be said, that such men lose their influence, and with it their power for mischief. It is true that, by degrees, more and more decline argument with them, and they cease to have any convincing power, because it is seen that they themselves do



not rest in permanent convictions ; but their disturbing power remains. They can destroy, though they cannot build up. They can unsettle minds which yet they cannot lead. They can distress and perplex the humble and narrowly-informed ; —they can startle, not only the slothful, (who will turn to sleep again, on the plea of the foible of the awakener) but the nervous and feeble who need repose ; and, worse than all, they can irreparably injure the young, by spreading before them wide fields of inquiry, and then hunting them out of every corner in which they would be disposed to stay, and rest, and think. Men of this kind of mind have a certain power of sympathy with every species of opinion ; and this good and attractive quality it is which mainly causes their self-deception, and aggravates their power of injury. They mistake it for candour, at the very moment that they overflow with intolerance towards holders of opinions which they have relinquished. The result in such cases is always the same,—intellectual ruin, throughout the department of the understanding, however eminent the dialectical powers may appear, through the constant practice which has increased their original

strength ; and with the intellectual damage must be combined great moral injury. Göthe's method appears to be dangerous ; but the opposite one is fatal.

To us, the depositories of vast confidences on these matters, it appears that there is no manner of necessity for either practice. We can avouch, from what we witness, that there may be sympathy with every order of understanding and every phase of opinion, without either hypocrisy, or tendency to disputation, or a surrender of differing views. We see how there may be an intrepid and continuous avowal of opinions, without disturbance to the unlearned and the feeble. We can fully agree with Göthe as to the unequalled mischief of endangering belief in that vast majority of minds which have other work to do than to investigate matters of opinion, without seeing it to be at all necessary to countenance what we know or believe to be error. We can fully agree with his practical antagonists as to the nobleness of candour, and the evils which ensue from dogmatism ; while, at the same time, we would sooner die than dare to tempt one intellect to follow us, after one self-conviction of such an



instability as theirs. Where there is a habit of mutability, there is intellectual infirmity, as is shown, with indescribable clearness, to us gazers into the mirror of events. It is a singular privilege granted to us, to witness the workings of the best method,—of that “simplicity and godly sincerity” which is unconsciously adopted by the wise to whom Truth is neither the spirit of rashness, nor “of fear, but of power and of love, and of a sound mind.”

It has occurred to me, at times, that a second volume,—“On the Formation and Publication of Opinions,”—less popularly useful perhaps than the existing one, but deeper and more comprehensive, might be an invaluable gift from the hands of some one in a retreat, (in a sick retreat, as illness invites confidence,)—from the hands of some one who would know how to use with equal discretion and intrepidity his singular opportunities.

One of our most valuable discoveries is often made elsewhere, but is not sufficiently acknowledged and acted upon. We find, after a trial of many methods, that we learn to endure and achieve less by direct effort than by putting ourselves under influences favourable to the state of

mind we seek. We have discovered the same thing before, in regard to mending our faults. We have found that childhood and youth were the seasons of resolution, and that, perhaps, we have not since cured ourselves of a single fault by direct effort. I am persuaded that instances are extremely rare of rectification by such means. I have myself amended only one bad habit—and that a very trifling one—by express effort, since I was twenty; and I could point out only two or three, of all my acquaintance, that I know to be capable of self-improvement in that direct manner; and I cannot but honour them in proportion to my sense of the difficulty and rarity of this exercise of moral power. Yet, how people go on expecting reformation in sinners from a mere conviction of the reason actuating the will, as they suppose, infallibly! the consequence of which foolish expectation is, that the true appliances are neglected. Wordsworth has it—

“ ‘ Resolve ! ’ the haughty moralist would say :

‘ This single act is all that we demand.’

Alas ! such wisdom bids a creature fly,

Whose very sorrow is that Time hath shorn

His natural wings ! ”

Instead of losing time, and practically invoking



despair, by exhorting to impossible flights, wise guardians will rather remove the sufferer into an element of new enterprise, or one which may gradually exhaust and destroy his parasitical foes of habit. We sufferers experimentally ascertain this very soon. We find how little reason we have to trust to efforts of resolution under circumstances which tend to enfeeble resolution. We might be capable, as so many others are, of any amount of effort on a single emergency ; but when we have to deal with a permanent infliction—to make the best of a difficult mode of life—we find that we must put our trust in abiding influences, and not in a succession of efforts. We therefore lay aside defiance ; we submit ourselves—not to our troubles—but to every kind of natural preventive, remedy, and solace. We arrange our personal habits so as to husband our ease, and to conceal our pain ; and we place our minds under such influences, intellectual and spiritual, as may best nourish our higher powers, and occupy our energies, to the alleviation, if it may not be to the exclusion, of the suffering, whose challenge we will neither entertain nor defy.

Among other merits of this method, may be

reckoned this—that it helps to introduce us to a privilege which may be disregarded by many, but which to us is inestimable—that of causing pleasure, rather than pain, to those connected with us. It is the prerogative of the healthy and happy to give pleasure wherever they go; it is the worst humiliation and grievance of the suffering, that they cause suffering. To the far-seeing invalid, who is aware not only of this immediate effect, but of its remote consequences, this is the most afflicting feature of his condition. If we can, by any management, evade this liability, we have cause to be grateful indeed. If, by submitting ourselves to all softening and ennobling influences, we can so nourish and educe the immortal part of ourselves as to subdue our own conflicts, and present our active and enjoying aspect to those who visit us, we are absolved from the worst penalties of our state. If, as years pass on, we find ourselves sought from the impulse of inclination, as well as from the stringency of duty—if we are permitted to see faces light up from ours, and hear the music of mirth succeed to the low serious tones of sympathetic greeting—we may let our hearts bound with the assurance that all is well with us. When



we cannot refuse to see that children come to us eagerly, and that our riper companions stay late by our sofa, and come again and again, till nothing short of duty calls them away, any one might envy us the feelings with which we lie down again in our solitude. We are not proud, like the young beauty with her conquest over hearts, or like the political or literary hero with his sway over the passions or the reason ; but we are elate—and not without cause—elate in our privilege of annihilating the constraint and distaste inspired by our condition, and of finding ourselves restored to something like an equality of intercourse with the healthy in soul. The best and highest must ever be selected from among the healthy and the happy—from among those whose conditions of being are the most perfectly fulfilled ; but, without aspiring to their consummate privileges, we feel ourselves abundantly blessed in such a partial emancipation as permits us, on occasion, and without shame, to join their “glorious company.”

THE END.

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