

## Trusting God in the Dark.

BY THEODORE L. CUTLER, D. D.

Sometimes we have an experience in life that seems like walking through a long, dark tunnel. The chilling air and the thick darkness make it hard walking, and the constant wonder is why we are compelled to tread so gloomy a path, while others are in the open day of health and happiness. We can only fix our eyes on the bright light at the end of the tunnel, and we comfort ourselves with the thought that every step we take brings us nearer to the joy and the rest that lies at the end of the way. Extinguish the light of Heaven that gleams in the distance, and this tunnel of trial would become a horrible tomb! Some of us are passing through just such an experience now. We can adopt the plaintive language of the Psalmist, and cry out: "Thy hand presseth us sore; as for the light of our eyes, it also is gone from us; we are ready to halt, and our sorrow is continually before us."

One of the most trying features of our trial is that we cannot discover the "why" or the "wherefore" of our special afflictions. Our Heavenly Father did not consult us before the trial came, and he does not explain to us why he sent it. His ways are not our ways, nor his thoughts our thoughts; nay, they are the very opposite. The mystery of the providence perplexes and staggers us. For example, I open my daily journal, and read that the Bishop of Jerusalem, whom I left a few months ago in the prime of vigorous health and wide usefulness, is cut off in the midst of his days. All his preparatory training for his office by eighteen years of missionary life comes to naught. This very day I am called for the sixth time in a few years to bury the dead from a certain Christian household. This time it is the head of the house that is taken and the children are left to orphanage. Beside me now sits a mourning mother, whose aching heart cannot understand why a beloved child is snatched away, when she seemed the most indispensable to the happiness of the home. Every week a pastor has to confront these mysteries in the dealings of a God of love. To the torturing question "Why does God lead me into this valley of the shadow of darkness?" we can only reply: "Even so, Father, for so it seems good in thy sight." We are brought into the tunnel, however we shrink back. There is no retreat; we have nothing left to us but to grasp the very hand that brought us there and push forward. Like Bunyan's Pilgrim, we can only say: "I see not but that my road to Heaven lieth through this very valley."

Just in such trying hours it is that the Adversary assails us most fiercely. He stirs up in our hearts bitter thoughts against God. He points us to the actual and realized loss, and tells us that Heaven is utterly unseen and no one comes back to assure us of its reality. And so he endeavors, with devilish suggestions, to blow out such lamps of divine promise as we have, to shatter every staff that we carry, and to make the pathway of trial the more dark and desperate than before. This is not poetry; it is the actual trial to which the faith of thousands of God's people is at this moment subjected. Under these severe experiences, more than one Christian has been sorely tempted to turn infidel and to "choose death rather than life."

To my own mind there is only one solution for these mysteries and only one support for these days of terrible affliction. The only relief I can find is in the certainty that this life is not the end; but simply and only the preparatory school for the real and the endless life that is beyond. The moment that I accept this truth fully and hold it firmly, I find solid ground for my feet and light for my sorrow-

ing soul. Then I discover that the whole journey of the believer is "portioned out" to him, and that the dark tunnel on the road is just as surely appointed wisely as is the most flowery mead or the happiest walk over the "Delectable Mountains." Nay, more. When we reach heaven, we may discover that the richest and deepest and most profitable experiences we had in this world were those which were gained in the very roads from which we shrink back with dread. The bitter cups we tried to push away contained the medicines we most needed. The hardest lessons that we learn are those which teach us the most and best fit us for service here and glory hereafter. It is the easiest thing in the world to obey God when he commands us to do what we like and to trust him when the path is all sunshine. The real victory of faith is to trust God in the dark and through the dark. Let us be assured of this, that, if the lesson and the rod are of his appointing and that his all-wise love has engineered the deep tunnels of trial on the heavenward road, he will never desert us during the discipline. The vital thing for us is, not to deny and desert him.

Let us also keep in mind that the chief object of the discipline is to develop character and to improve the graces of his children. Whom he loveth he chastises, and correcteth every son whom he receiveth. Every branch that beareth not fruit he pruneth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. "Why do you cut that pomegranate bush so cruelly?" said a gentleman to his gardener. The answer was: "Because it is all running to useless leaves, and I want to make it bear." Ah! it is a keen knife that our Divine Gardener often employs, and he often severs the very heart-strings by his discipline; but "afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness. God has a great many crucibles for his gold, where he may refine it. There is so much alloy of pride and self-will, or covetousness, or sinful idolatry in genuine Christians that they require the "fining-pot" and the furnace. Sometimes prosperity is ten-fold more damaging to us than sharp adversity. A fit of sickness may do more for soul-health than years of bodily strength and comfort.

To all my readers who are wondering why a loving God has subjected them so often to the furnace, my only answer is that *God owns you and me*, and he has a right to do with us just as he pleases. If he wants to keep his silver over a hot flame, until he can see his own countenance reflected in the metal, then he has a right to do so. It is the Lord, it is my loving teacher, it is my Heavenly Father; let him do what seemeth to him good. He will not lay on one stroke in cruelty or a single one that he cannot give me grace to bear. Life's school-days and nights will soon be over. Pruning-time will soon be ended. The crucibles will not be needed in heaven.

So, to all my fellow-sufferers who are threading their way through the tunnels of trial, I would say: Tighten your loins with the promises and keep the strong staff of faith well in hand. Trust God in the dark. We are safer with him in the dark than without him in the sunshine. He will not suffer thy foot to stumble. His rod and his staff never break. Why he brought us here we know not now, but shall know hereafter. At the end of the gloomy passage beams the heavenly light. Then comes the ex-celling and eternal weight of glory!  
—Independent.

## A Favorite Paper.

For judicious editing, select and popular contributors, and sprightly and entertaining reading, the *Youth's Companion*, of Boston, has no superior among the youth's publications. It has more than two hundred thousand subscribers, and unquestionably merits its success.

## Arthur Sullivan.

There is hardly a boy or girl in this country who does not know some of the tunes in *Pinafore* by heart—few, indeed, among our readers who have not heard the opera—and all will be interested in hearing something about the composer of that delightful music.

Arthur Sullivan is a bright-eyed, dark-haired man thirty-seven years of age. When quite a little fellow he was a choir-boy in the chapel of St. James's Palace in London, and at thirteen years he had made such progress in musical studies that he composed an anthem that was sung in the chapel before the Queen. On this occasion, he relates, with a merry twinkle in his eyes, the Bishop of London patted him on the head, and gave him ten shillings. At the age of fourteen, Arthur Sullivan won the Mendelssohn Scholarship in the Royal Academy of Music, being the youngest of those who tried for it, and was sent to Leipsic, in Germany, to study under the most famous musicians of the time.

Strange though it may seem, the name of the composer of *Pinafore* first became known by a sacred oratorio, called the *Prodigal Son*. Since that time Mr. Sullivan has written other oratorios, as well as a great many songs that are sung everywhere; and there is hardly a hymn-book that does not contain several hymns by this same great musician. The composer of *Pinafore* has followed up his success in that opera with two others (also commencing with a P), the *Pirates of Penzance* and *Patience*, and it is said that he is already at work upon yet another one.

It may be said that comic operas are very light work for a great musician to devote himself to; but those which Arthur Sullivan has composed are the best of their kind, and the man who makes people glad-hearted does as much good as he who makes them wise.—*Harper's Young People*.

—After all the counsel we can get from those who are wisest, and who love us most dearly, the final decision as to our personal duty must rest with ourselves. It is for us to say what it is best for us to do—all things considered—in every emergency. This is the teaching of revelation and of experience, of clearly inspired and of purely practical teachers. Moses said, "Thou shalt not follow the multitude to do evil." Paul went farther, and suggested that it is not right to let the multitude settle the question of what is evil. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind"—on points of his duty—is Paul's injunction. Solomon gives a reason for this personal settling of personal duties, in his reference to the absolute separateness of every individual soul. "The heart knoweth his own bitterness [as no one else can know it]; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with [cannot enter into] his joy." All by himself each soul must, at times, be depressed, and, at times, be uplifted, must delight and must suffer, must live and must die; and "then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." It is because of our separateness from every other soul in our innermost experiences and in our ultimate accountability, that it behooves us to recognize our individual responsibility for our individual conduct, and to be rightly independent accordingly. The quaint advice of Henry Vaughan is as timely to us all to-day as it was to any one who read it two centuries ago:

"Seek not the same steps with the crowd; stick thou  
To thy sure trot; a constant, humble mind  
Is both his own joy, and his Maker's too;  
Let folly dust it on, or lag behind.  
A sweet self-privacy in a right soul  
Oustrans the earth, and lines the utmost pole."  
—S. S. Times.

Purge out the morbid humors of the blood by a dose or two of Ayer's Pills, and you will have clearer heads as well as healthier bodies.

## "A Long Journey."

We never may count the painted and trodden hearts under the feet of the world's great caravan. Now and then a stray bit of human sentiment like the following stops the rough travel for an instant; and then the crowd sweeps on. The *Detroit Post and Tribune* tells this simple story of a little coffin and its only mourner:

When one of the trains to this city came in at midnight a few nights ago, an old man was found sleeping in one of the seats.

"I say, old man," yelled the conductor, "git out of this; do you hear? This is Detroit. If you've got any friends, they'll be looking for you."

"Where's Gracie?"

"Who?" asked the conductor, recovering his official voice.

"Little Gracie—grandpa's little pet! I brought her with me. Is she there?"

"I guess he is not wide awake yet," said the curious passenger. "Suppose you help him to his feet."  
Conductors are experts in helping people to their feet, and this one was no exception to the rule. He took the old man by the coat collar and stood him up, but he sank down the next moment limp and motionless. Just then a depot-hand came in.

"The baggage-master wants to know what you're goin' to do with that little deal box over there. He don't want any of that kind left over, and there's no direction on it but 'Gracie'—"

"That's her!" said the old man, and he stood up feebly. "Take me there. We're going a long journey—Gracie and me; a long, long journey, but it don't seem as if I knew the way right clear."

They took him into the depot and laid him on one of the benches and put his carpet-bag under his head, but still he fretted for his "little Gracie—his pet," and at last they consoled him by telling him she was resting, was asleep, and must not be disturbed.

The little "box," with Gracie written upon it in lead pencil, was safe enough with the other "freight," and the old man slept peacefully at last. Some kind soul threw a rug over him near morning, and asked him what train he was waiting for, but all the answer he made was a feeble "Thank'ee—tell me at sunrise. We're going a long journey, Gracie and me."

He was called at sunrise by a voice that none may refuse, and when a flood of rosy light shone into the dreary room he was up and away—gone on his long journey. Only the worn out body was there, and yesterday it was laid with "little Gracie" in the strangers lot at Mount Elliott, unknown, yet possibly in as "sure hope of a gracious resurrection" as if marked by 30 feet of monumental clay.—*Ex.*

## Toilet Set.

A very pretty toilet set is made of the checked crash toweling. Cut your mats the size you desire to fit your bureau, allowing for a hem an inch wide. Draw the threads close to hem and hemstitch all round. Then leave a plain space of  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch. Then draw threads until you have a space of  $\frac{1}{2}$  or  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches. Take ribbon the width of the space drawn, run it in over and under alternately, taking up threads of  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch space each time. Finish the corners where the open square occurs with a bow of ribbon. Antique lace, around the edges adds much to their beauty. This is not an expensive set and can be washed by taking out the ribbon, and then it is as good as new. The toweling-check-off with red, and run with ribbon, is the prettiest.—*Ex.*

"Truth and love are two of the most powerful things in the world; and when they both go together they cannot easily be withstood."

## A Word to the Girls.

What, detest the care to be spotless as a lily, sweet and fresh as lavender, a blessing to those who see her, a part of all fair and comely scenes, instead of something discordant, marring them? I refuse to believe it of any girl who reads this. Now let the Wise Blackbird drop a bit of wisdom in your ears which will take the harshness out of every disagreeable duty in life. In beginning a task, never under any circumstances consider how easily it can be done, but how well it can be, you find it growing easier day by day. At last every thing seems to come right to your hand, and all things conspire to help you. A girl of twelve should know how to mend nicely both stockings and clothes, and to cut and make most articles she wears. There are plenty of girls who can do this now, but every girl ought to do it. A small book might be written on the care of clothes, but I will only tell you a few labor-saving hints:

Instead of brushing the dust from a gown, or the mud from a drabbed flounce, inch by inch, take your dress out on clean, short grass, after the dew is off, and holding by the shoulders, sweep and beat it against the sward, turning that all sides of the skirt will touch the ground. The grass acts as a fine soft brush, taking out the dust, and freshening every part, while it does not wear dresses as a hair-brush or whisk-broom does. Lawn dresses and grenadines are refreshed safely in this way when a brush would fray them. The flounces and platings of silk are thoroughly dusted, and the hems of drabbed water-proof cloaks are cleaned without the disagreeable need of touching them with the hand. I never saw the lightest frock stained or worn in the least by grass.

Pour boiling water through fruit-stains until they disappear, holding the spot stretched firmly. Carry a needle threaded with cotton or silk, to match your dress, and you are ready for accidents. Darn thread gloves, which are always dropping stitches like Jacob's-ladder, with ravelings of old gloves. In the present fashion of wearing mittens you can prolong the usefulness of long-wristed gloves when the finger-tips wear out, by cutting them off evenly at the lower joint, hemming the edges with ravelings, and pressing them with a hot iron when you have a neat pair of Nell Gwynne gloves.—*Wide Awake*.

—Among the Jews in olden time—if, indeed, the same be not true of the Jews of to-day—the idea prevailed that it was requisite to advance the length of at least 'two doors' within a synagogue before settling to prayer. It is a pity that custom does not prevail with attendants at all Christian prayer meetings. It would have a wonderful effect in warming up the social atmosphere of the gathering. One of the great hindrances, or barriers, to a good prayer-meeting, is the number of empty front seats—which often are as a great gulf fixed between the leader and his little flock. The common idea, in the average church prayer meeting, seems to be for the early comers to get as near the door as possible, and for those who come later to get behind them. If you want to help the prayer meeting, fill up that row of front seats to begin with. At all events "advance the length of at least two doors" within the room "before settling to prayer." Don't be behind the Jews.—*S. S. Times*.

—I have found nothing yet which requires more courage and independence than to rise even a little, but decidedly, above the par of the religious world around us. Surely the way in which we commonly go on is not the way of self-denial and sacrifice and cross-bearing which the New Testament talks of.—*Dr. J. W. Alexander*.