

FELLOWSHIP.

A decorative initial letter 'F' in a white, ornate, gothic-style font. The letter is highly stylized with intricate flourishes, including a large, pointed top and a base that curves into a series of elegant, leaf-like or floral shapes. The word 'FELLOWSHIP.' is written in a smaller, clean, serif font across the middle of the 'F'.

17. C.

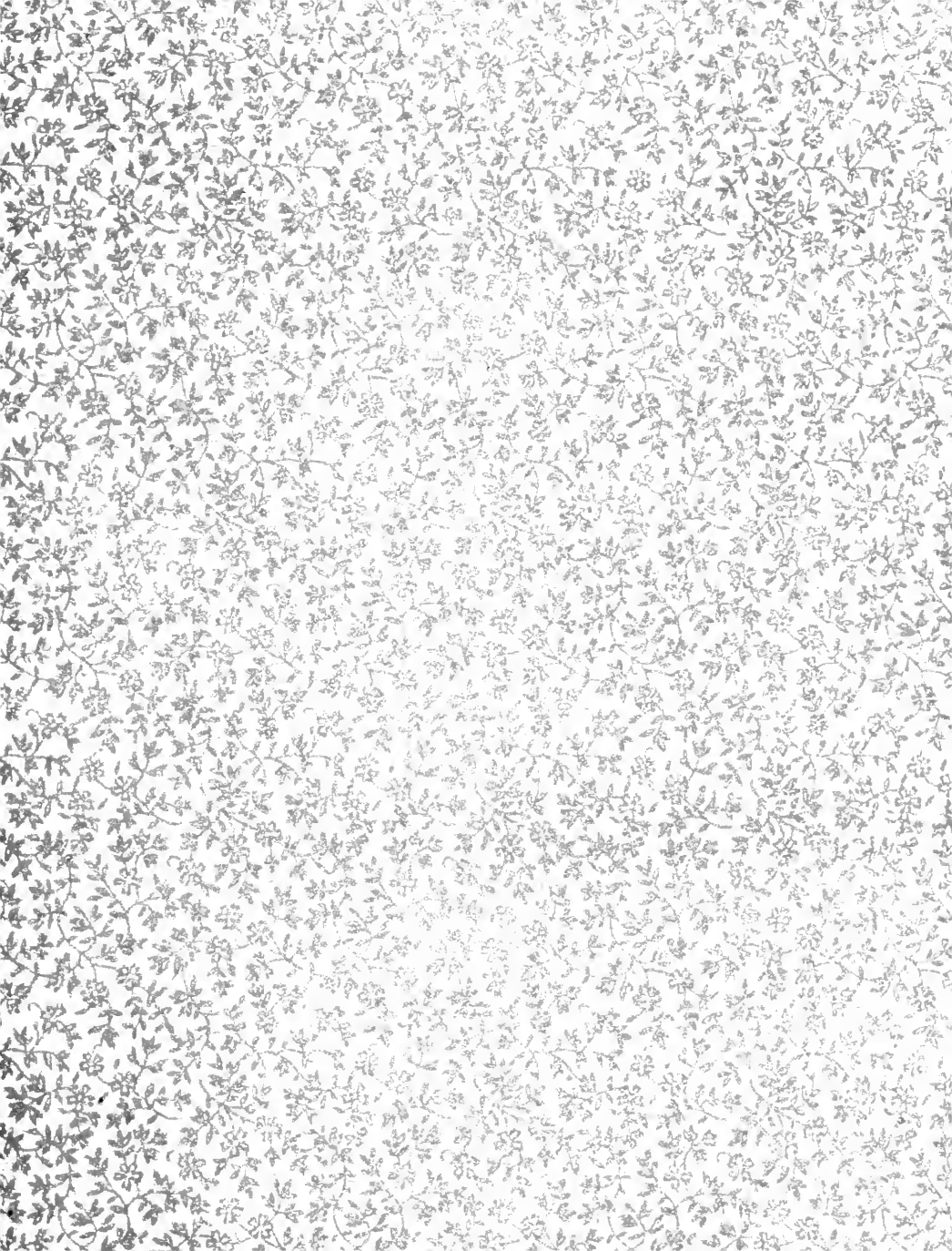
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FELLOWSHIP.

FELLOWSHIP:



Letters addressed to My Sister
Mourners.

NEW EDITION, ENLARGED.

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*“ At the time when affliction is laid upon us,
we are sometimes too deeply troubled to think
soberly as we ought to think. We can see a
thousand reasons why the cherished One ought to
live, not one reason why he should die.”*

**“ THE DISCIPLINE OF SORROW,” BY WILLIAM G. ELIOT
PASTOR OF THE CHURCH OF THE MESSIAH, ST. LOUIS.**



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FIRST LETTER



FIRST LETTER.

THERE are those in this world (women) who live, for a period, in the halcyon and perpetual exercise of devoted tenderness for one lawful and all-engrossing object. Their duty and their love unite in one even, deep stream; for their duty is their sweetest affection, their affection their dearest duty. To some of those favoured, happy hearts,

TO MY SISTER MOURNERS.

there comes, and always apparently suddenly, a change in their whole existence: a change at first not understood, not believed—like a bad dream—when he who has been the life of their life is gone from them! seen no more, heard no more, touched no more!—when the pictures look down from the walls—the books from the shelves—when the clocks strike as before—when the same objects are seen through the same window panes—but when your own very identity seems to have departed with him you love,

FIRST LETTER.

and a miserable, joyless wretch crawls languidly about in your place. And from this bad dream there is no waking;—you ask yourself twenty times an hour, in blank amazement, “*Is it true?*” and as often the hollow void returns the inexorable affirmative, “It is true.”

You are now dimly feeling what you have read, heard—perhaps witnessed—yet what you never really comprehended before. You know now why a friend was prostrated with grief beyond what you felt to be moderation

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and reason. You now believe the old school-book tale that Henry I., after the drowning of his son, never smiled again—you now feel that you have never sympathised enough with our stricken Queen. The dreadful hunger is now gnawing at your own heart—that hunger for one dearer than ever, and—dead!

To such as you, Sister Mourners, —stricken, writhing, amazed—I venture to address myself. I have but one claim to thrust myself into the presence of such woe, which is that

FIRST LETTER.

I know it. I have learned the dreadful lesson—I have passed through the first period of that weary illness. For, believe me, the only reasonable view to take of your own state is as of one smitten with a sore sickness,—the sorest the heart can suffer. And this being the case, it is our part to investigate the nature of this illness, what its remedies, and what the time before relief can be expected.

At first the stroke does not seem so unbearable. There is great fatigue, a certain excitement—all are still speak-

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TO MY SISTER MOURNERS.

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ing of the beloved One ; he is dead, but the subject is still alive ; you yourself are the centre of tender attention. You submit to all that goes on necessarily around you—you even fancy that you are being carried through your trial, and your friends applaud you, in cant language, for “bearing up.”

But the excitement passes—the days drag on—things return to their usual routine. The formal mechanism of the old life is resumed, sternly confronted by utterly new conditions.

FIRST LETTER.

Your poor heart begins to recover consciousness, and pain in proportion to consciousness. It *will* run in the old groove—like a faithful dog it will take the same old path, only to be turned, whining, back. That old happy life is still so near; perhaps but a few weeks—but a few days ago! But a deep gulf lies between. It seemed but a little fissure at first, but it yawns wider and wider, and its opposite shores—we on the one side, those we love on the other—are two different states of being

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Now is the time when the true nature of our illness needs to be recognized, yet rarely is so; when friends expect that we ought to be beginning to recover, but when, in reality, we are only beginning to be ill.



SECOND LETTER.



SECOND LETTER.

WHEN I was first entering this dark pass of affliction, weary even with the first rough steps, and utterly dismayed by the glimpses of the road before me, an old friend, who had traversed that way, said to me a few words on which my heart pounced and fed,—“ Believe me, there is nothing for it but the knees.” Yes, dear sisters, the knees

TO MY SISTER MOURNERS.

are our posture—really, if we can,—in spirit, if so situated that we cannot. Yet here especially, the conditions of our illness have to be taken into account. It is its particular character that our very religion seems to fail us at the time we need it most. The faith of our happier days, when we thanked God for the present, and trusted Him for the future, is now but a cobweb against the bitter blast. All seems to give way beneath us—you are saturated with grounds for resignation — friends repeat them —

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SECOND LETTER.

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you repeat them to yourself. You know that God is Love—you know that your beloved one is taken from suffering, and from a disappointing world. You know numberless assurances of consolation—promises without end—but you know them only, as it were, by rote. They may be close to you, but only as a vessel of water may stand close to a withering plant—they reach not, they refresh not, the pining heart. This *is* the furnace of affliction—and this is what takes us so much by surprise—but it is partly

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ignorance of our malady which is the cause. There are laws belonging to that malady as much as to any known physical ailment. Typhus fever is not more defined in its symptoms and possible duration than is our long agony. The question in both is not how to arrest or to cure the evil, for that is impossible—but how to sustain the flagging powers under it. In this sense there is truly nothing for it but the knees. Yet let us not expect that we shall rise from them without our cross. As sorrow is an illness, so

SECOND LETTER.

prayer is intended to be our needful sustenance under it. It is not meant to remove our pain—we *are* to suffer.

But, in the treatment of this illness, the highest born mourner is sometimes worse off than the commonest hospital fever patient. Each have equally the great Physician—nigh, though not felt—but as regards earthly physicians, they are very differently situated. The hospital patient has an experienced doctor at his side, well acquainted with his case; not expecting him to rally in a hurry,

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but rather deprecating all premature exertion of strength. The mourner, on the contrary, has too often ignorant, however well-meaning, theorists around her—helpless to console, officious to advise; urging remedies and promising results of which they themselves have no experience; who lay unskilled, and therefore rough hands upon the bleeding heart, and torture, under belief of binding up.

Of this class of theorists are those who, like ignorant medical men, are for doctoring the symptoms instead of

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the disorder. "Repress the anguish — divert the spirits — change the scene," that is their cry ; in short, send the symptoms *inward*. But let one who knows the dreadful reaction after attempting such a process, warn you never to try it—your punishment will be twofold, both in the unnatural effort to divert the course of the flood, and in its redoubled fury after.

And let not the cant reproach of "indulging your grief," disturb you — the very words are an imbecile

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TO MY SISTER MOURNERS.

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contradiction in terms; can we turn our sorrow off and on as we please? Is chloroform refused by those under the knife? Do people indulge in *the rack*? With more truth might the mourner retort, "Would that my sorrow would indulge me!" Happy are those who can talk thus; they know little of that grief to which I here address myself; they have no conception of an "indulgence" which rends, rather than relieves, the heart. But, if by indulging grief is meant the spending

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it, then I say to you, spend it all you can—grief laid up only bears compound interest; live *in* your sorrow; let the heart ache itself out. If you can weep much, be thankful—those may well envy you who cannot. In short, favour the bringing out of the symptoms; this may render you apparently more ill for the time, but it relieves and shortens the illness in the end. These symptoms are our safeguards, for they are nature's way of throwing off the disorder.

Let me not, however, be misunder-

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stood—it is mockery to accuse us of indulging in our agony, yet, on the other hand, we must meet it with remedies as strong as itself. Of these, work is as indispensable as prayer. Why does the active man of business, why do the poor, bear sorrow better than those who live at ease? Simply because they have allotted work to do, and because (and this is a most important truth to bear in mind), whether the work be that of the desk, the shop, or the wash-tub, *the sorrow goes on through it*: the remedy is safe, because

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SECOND LETTER.

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the symptoms are not checked. That intuitive doctor of the human heart—the true poet—has said this. Wordsworth's lines contain a treasure of truth—

“Grief! thou hast lost an ever-ready friend,
Now that the cottage spinning-wheel is mute.”

It is here that we ladies pay for our higher culture, more refined pleasures, and for our now most unwelcome liberty and leisure. Our more lowly sister mourner *must* work, and perhaps harder than ever, while we in many cases are thrown even out of

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our former pursuits—they require more mind than muscle—they are saturated with associations, or often they are not compatible with our altered condition. Yet work we must in some shape in self-defence; if we are idle, our sorrow is doubly busy.



THIRD LETTER.



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THIRD LETTER.

I HAVE spoken of the trials of the mourner from amateur prescribers. I must now say a little upon another class with which we are beset, namely, the amateur *comforters*. Let me speak gently of those whose intentions are kind, and their nostrums sacred—however these may be misapplied.

We live in a religious age, and we



TO MY SISTER MOURNERS.

may be thankful that we do, but there are unavoidable penalties accompanying it; and one of these penalties falls hard upon the mourner. The religious education of many is based upon assertions and descriptions which, when tested, are not found literally true. Comfort in affliction is talked about so glibly, that the estimate of the mourner's trial is proportionally lowered. For the tacit inference is that suffering, for which a sure remedy is at hand, need neither be very long nor very severe. This belief is a great as-



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sistance to the looker-on, but it entails much misery on the mourner. The good people who think thus cannot be satisfied with bearing with us, with weeping with us—they must be doing what they think their duty by us; and this usually consists in discharging a number of texts at us, which they believe to be infallible. These texts *are* infallible—we know that;—the error is as to the occasion for which they are intended, and the time of their bearing effect. The Scriptures are a precious medicine chest—our

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only one—but its contents must be given with discrimination. There is a long battle to be fought before we can “rejoice in affliction.” The heart must be convalescent before it can break forth into “songs in the night.” The words that “so He giveth His beloved rest” (whatever their real meaning), imply an appointed, previous struggle. Tell a sufferer, in her first weeks of agony, that if she believe God to be an ever-present Refuge in time of trouble, she will find Him so, and you add to her cross the despair that God is *not* a

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present Refuge to her. Sorrow is intensely literal in its interpretations; those who write for it, and talk to it, are too often loose and vague. How true and ever-recurring is the story of Job and his comforters; it is one of the oldest stories on record, but every day brings a fresh edition of it. At first the friends admitted the strong law of grief,—they bowed before it,—they sat silent, and it was the best thing they could do. But they soon tired of seeing no fruits of their long journey, and began to think, not of Job,

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but of themselves. They had come to comfort him, and he was to be comforted, and in their way, or he could not be right with God. Alas! we also could say, "Have pity on me, have pity on me, oh ye my friends; for the hand of the Lord has touched me." "Miserable comforters are ye all."

In all this, there are simply mistaken views as to our state—fruits are expected for which the seed is hardly sown; medicine put to our lips adapted only for a much later stage of our malady. We are like children, patient

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if you tell them the truth, impatient if they are deceived with false promises. Our friends are right enough as to what we need, but wrong as to the possibility of its being *now* supplied. We *do* need "comfort"—we pray for it; we pine for it; but it comes not—and moreover it will not *consciously* come. For sorrow (of our sort) and comfort are as incompatible as typhus fever and refreshing nights.

Let, then, our well-wishers be content to give that which we can take, or else, let them leave us in peace—

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precious balms, at wrong seasons, only break the head. We cannot yet take comfort, and they cannot yet really administer it. But there are medicines fitted for us which, by God's Providence, the humblest heart can bestow, and which are in everybody's power, and these medicines are, patience with us, and respect for us. Bear patiently and respectfully with us in all our weary groanings and tossings, and tell us to bear patiently with ourselves. Tell us that we are *ill*, and that it will be long ere we can be

THIRD LETTER.

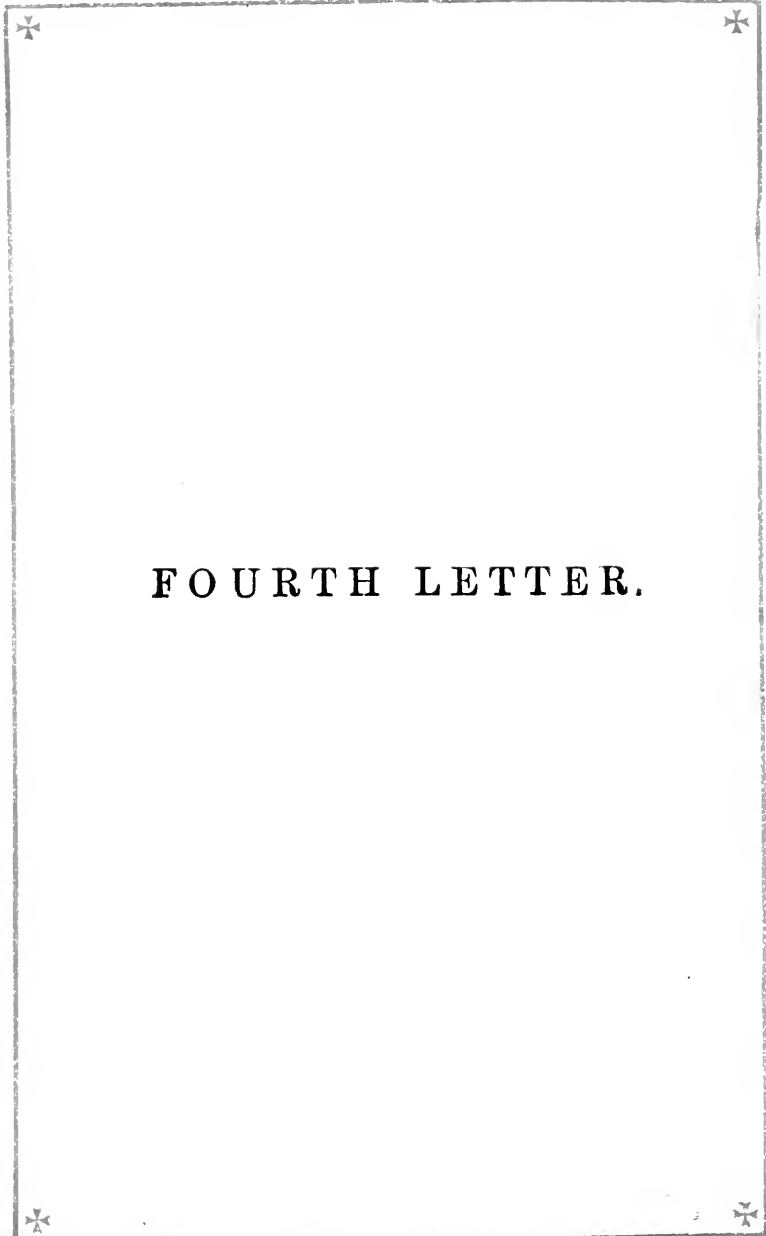
better. Warn us even that our sufferings may increase; for it is not the first weeks of separation, it is *the continued absence* of the beloved One which draws the strain so tight on the heart. Assure us that God knows all we suffer—that He appointed it—that He is nigh to us, close to us, although we feel Him to be so far off; and remind us—and, if with soft tears and tender touches of sympathy, we shall believe you the more readily—that this rugged road of the Cross, on which we stumble and fall

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with bleeding feet, has been sanctified,
and, in the end, smoothed to us, by the
blessed passage of One who was made
perfect thereon.



FOURTH LETTER.

FOURTH LETTER.

I HAVE hinted at what our fellow-creatures may do, and what they should avoid. Now let me endeavour to define what we may do for ourselves ; what we *must* do for ourselves, for no human hand can really help us. The fight for strength lies between us and our God. It is *He* we want, and He must and will *be sought*. And let us

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remember that in all matters of practical faith, time, and much time, is understood; faith only becomes faith by the test of time—all Scripture promises to the troubled are in the future tense—implying an interval of patience and trust in the supplicant. “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted”—not they *are* comforted.

I take for granted that, however sore the stroke, there is no rebellion in your heart—no wondering *why* you are afflicted. God must never be ques-

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tioned. This is the only form in which we first submit to the Divine will. But submission is one thing, resignation another, though they are often confounded;—we submit ourselves, we resign another. This submission, it is true, is a very negative affair—a necessity, not a free will offering; we must submit to the Great Giver and Taker. There is no choice for us left. Then we crave (at least I did) for the mere evidences that *God did it*. This avowal, in the mouth of a Christian, seems little better than Atheism; but,

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as I have said, the characteristic of the fiery furnace is that the very foundations of our religion seem to fail us before its fury. And forth from the depths of Holy Writ rise the great ancient, monumental notes, sounding in our ear, "Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder Him? who will say unto Him, What doest thou?" (Job ix. 12.)

He doeth according to His will among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou?" (Dan. iv. 35.)

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“I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.” (Psalm xxxix. 9.)

Ah! it was no chance or accident that has thus shipwrecked us. If God be in anything, He is in everything. There is no half-way creed. This great rudimental fact is, at all events, firm ground in the floods perpetually rising around us. But why this intensity of suffering, this unendurable weight of a lifeless life? And here again a fresh group of inspired words shine upon us, and how different to the

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interpretation which our Job's comforters have put upon them! For Scripture never speaks of our woe being removed, but of the fruits (of comfort) it is *afterwards* to bring forth. It is always suffering first, consolation afterwards. "I waited *patiently* for the Lord, and (having so done) he inclined unto me, and heard my cry." (Psalm xl. 1.) "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless *afterwards* it bringeth forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to those who are exer-

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cised thereby.” (Hebrews xii. 11.)

And again, “*After* that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.” (1 Peter v. 10.)

Thus suffering *is to be* for faith, and therefore comfort is in due time to be born of it. This is God’s way towards us, and in bearing tribulation, for an appointed time, *without* the sense of Divine comfort, we are in reality permitting God’s will to be entirely fulfilled in us. This is comfort—though it be not relief—for it is truth. Our posture, therefore, under agony is *to*

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wait; “patient *in* tribulation.” This is the grace we can exercise, and Scripture is fertile and precise on this point. “Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, on the Lord.” (Psalm xxvii. 14.)

We are now digging a field—no unusual field in this weary life;—we are not to expect suddenly to find a nugget of gold, and to be able to cease from our toil! no God-fearing husbandman does that; but he does look for a natural and blessed har-

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vest in God's time, and so may we.

A dear old friend, bereaved like ourselves, gave me in my first months of torture these three precepts, "*Be patient—Trust God—Look not beyond the day.*" All these are waiting precepts, and any one of them, earnestly attempted, is a stay to the bewildered heart.

And, dear sisters, be not tempted to try to feel, or talk about "strength and support." Good people are naturally anxious that we should give

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evidence of the faith that is in us. But they are too hasty for us at this early period ; such asseverations are only spiritual '*tours de force.*' Nor be induced to give assent to that exaggerated boast that if the lifting of a straw, as the conventional saying is, could bring the beloved One back, we would not lift it. Some poor mourners have not the moral courage to contradict this, lest they should be thought wicked. But, far from subscribing to such over-strained professions, we know in our heart at this period of our

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suffering, that if the lifting a house could restore them to us, we would strain every nerve to do it—though we might not wish to own as much. In truth we are not called upon for such unnatural talk. Our nature is from God, and He does not require us to force it, or to deny it. We *can* say, “the will of the Lord be done” when we can say nothing else, and we know that Will to be right and wise, but we cannot at first feel it to be loving. For that we must wait until He gives us power—and He will give it us.

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For next to mere submission, to the mere necessity of suffering, comes by slow degrees the more soothing, healing conviction that not only Divine Power and Wisdom have worked our woe, but a Divine feeling that wills our good. The solution to the mysterious contradiction between God's love and our anguish — between His silence and our passionate appeals — is in fact one of the great arterial truths of the Revealed system, summed up especially in one text, "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteth, and

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scourgeth (ah! how true is the very word!) every son whom He receiveth." He thus compels us to seek Him, and this, in other words, is His way of seeking us.

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FIFTH LETTER.

FIFTH LETTER.

It is strange how little we think of that which is everywhere in the very midst of our life! We see people in deep mourning; funerals meet us; there is no society or club which is not perpetually losing members and electing new ones—the Peerage does not remain a week the same—and yet we live on, as if not we, but those we love bet

TO MY SISTER MOURNERS.

ter than ourselves, were to live for ever. In truth, we are not intended to be dwelling on the death of those with whom our lives are most intertwined—few hearts can steadily fix that idea. To prepare for it by the certainty that they have the true Hope, and that we share it with them, is our duty; but preparation in any other sense I believe to be a delusion: we cannot prepare for that of the results of which we have no estimate; and there is no loss—I say it deliberately and from experience—which conveys any idea of that

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under which you and I are now smarting. This loss is always as strange as it is terrible. Poor mourners, who have been deceived by medical attendants, or who have deceived themselves, complain of not having been "prepared;" but this is a fallacy. We are so slow to believe that the inexpressible pain of our wound can be its generic characteristic, that we are always seeking to attribute it to some fortuitous circumstance. I do not speak of those pampered people whom nothing can convince that their dear ones are in

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peril, people who look nothing in the face, of whom there are plenty : such are not great sufferers. Still, you will say (and still I say), "but there were peculiar aggravations in my case, without which I could have borne it better." I suspect that all deep sorrow says this. There is always some secondary cause which tortures us—something in the illness or death which we would give worlds had been done, or had not been done. Ah! that very *something*, be sure, was exactly what God intended, and

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what he foreknew would throw us most helpless upon Him. We must always come back to that: He knows, appoints, and overrules *all things*—the apparent neglect, mistake, accident—tread on a lucifer match—which has laid waste your happiness, is as much His will and work as the volcano that devastates a region. Fasten your aching heart on this truth—let nothing tempt you from it. On that narrow path alone you are safe; all else, on each side, is a quicksand.

And we must not overlook the



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privileges, if we may so call them, of our sorrow—the immunity, namely, for a time, or even, in some sense, for life, from all other power of suffering. “Grief is strong to consume small troubles”—all troubles less than itself. Through the great breach minor matters pass comparatively unfelt. Certain trials even bring a sense of alleviation. Our first comprehension of rejoicing in tribulation—however misapplied the words—occurs when some misfortune falls which would have weighed heavily on him we



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lament. Then the unselfish mourner first gladly misses the beloved One from her side, and rejoices to suffer alone.

The loss or the bereavement of a friend too,—all these strokes which are always occurring, and which now seem multiplied as if life were one funeral procession,—affect us in a very different way to that which a looker-on expects. Kind friends are anxious to spare us the knowledge of fresh affliction—are troubled how to break it to us. But they are mistaken in

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their solicitude. The toll of the passing bell is even harmonious to our ears. Not that our sympathies are lessened—indeed they are larger, deeper, acuter, than ever, for we sympathise with knowledge—but all sense of personal pain is blunted; we take even a strange pleasure in the evidence that death is at work around us; it helps to strip our lot of its strangeness; there is a large human family to whom we still belong, and every stroke of death's wand adds to it. If our Queen knew how much the

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conscious fellowship of her great woe has helped many a poor humble sister in sorrow, she would feel that she had not, even in that respect, suffered in vain. To us, also, the bereavement of another brings something to do—something we can and may do—the mourner is free of the mourner—we are each other's natural society—and in ministering to the sad new-comer we spend our own anguish, while helping to spend hers.



SIXTH LETTER.

SIXTH LETTER.

I HAVE said how we can help ourselves, through God's grace, in appropriating certain texts, and realizing how they fit our sad hearts — but we must not be disappointed when we find that nothing helps us long — that nothing really takes one feather's weight from our burden. Have I not hinted that it must be long, nay,

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even that you may be worse, before you begin to rally. It is sorrow's cruel way to give no respite. If we could ever forget our grief, that would never forget us. It lies down with us at night, it rises with us in the morning. It is very jealous, too, for it permits not the slightest interest in anything besides itself, or that is analogous with itself. Our world is divided into two classes of consciousness—one absolutely painful, the other absolutely joyless. The power of relish is departed from us. Those strange

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words of Job now assume a meaning, whether canonical or not—"Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt, and is there any taste in the white of an egg? The things that my soul refuseth to touch are as my sorrowful meat." Our work has always to begin afresh, for our enemy never ceases its grasp, or ceases but to return as strong as before. Our daily life is one fight with our grief—and so, dear Sisters, it must be—hand to hand, inch for inch. While we are opposing it with weapons as persistent as its

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own, we are in a manner kept upright
—not to oppose is to fall.

And we have to fight with ourselves as well as with our woe ; for we all know how our sufferings are aggravated by self-torturing ingenuity. Those dreadful regrets that we did something, or did not do something which we would now give our lives to reverse ; alas ! what true mourner has not felt those ! But, believe me, you are not, at this time, fair judges of yourselves. The perfection with which your longing love invests him

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you mourn, leads to more than the abasing—to the calumniating of self. Conscience is more than tender—it is morbid. Be assured that, had you loved him, and served him twenty times as well, this iron would still enter your soul. As far as possible, therefore, exert a certain discipline over yourself—check yourself especially in *looking back*. In that direction we cease to fight, for in that direction lies an enemy, worse than our sorrow. Be on your guard, therefore (though there are times when this is like talking to

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the winds), against this drifting back of the mind. It can only end by sucking you under the overwhelming wave of despair; and where despair begins faith ends. To drive us to this is the great object of the Adversary. It is a temptation, therefore, which must be resisted at any cost of effort. I know how hard it is to set our faces towards land—to keep the rudder true,—but it is the only chance of getting into port. The Christian's battle cry is ever forward—onward—upward; and never more

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necessary to reiterate into our ears than in the peculiar temptations of an absorbing grief. We fight hard, God knows, for an inch of ground, and, when we have gained it, the next difficulty is to hold it fast.

But this interdict on looking back, is not only applicable to the mourner-- the Past is, by a natural law, forbidden ground for the happy as well as for the afflicted. To look back from gladness has always something saddening. The young always look forward, only, it is true, to greater supposed happiness,

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but never backward. It is the great penalty of Sin, the peculiar character of Remorse—the deep sting of a grave mistake,—that the mind is forced to look back. It is the blessed province of true repentance that it leads to the blotting out of the Past; that it sets the heart free from its wearing weight. The Pagan intuitively knew the danger of the backward glance. There is a deep meaning in the fable of Orpheus and Eurydice. She was lost to him by his looking back! St. Paul is the apostle who most dwells on

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forgetting the things that are behind. He, of all men, must have known the bitterness of self-accusation for foregone misdeeds. Yet there is no morbid dwelling upon that part of his history; it is told, and the grace of God recorded which made him what he was, but nothing more. We infer its true lesson by the urgency with which he bids us press forward.

And the mourner, with her feeble failing strength—only just enough for the day—is especially bound not to waste it on the wrong road. Her

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beloved One is before her, not behind her. There are two portals through which she may gaze with longing looks. Over the one are the fatal words "Nevermore"—over the other the blessed characters "Evermore." Oh! let us struggle towards that.



SEVENTH LETTER.

SEVENTH LETTER.

I HAVE dwelt upon Time as the great element by which Christian endurance of intense sorrow is tested. But, while Time is our trial, it is our medicine too—"God's medicine," as the poor call it; and both operations, the testing and the healing, flow on imperceptibly together. We are apt at times to think, with a kind of desperation, that

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there is no change in our symptoms ; and even to say, in our haste, that there never will be. In truth there are moments, and for very long, when the suffering is as severe as ever—perhaps more so than ever—for the length and weariness of the struggle seem added to the original amount against us. But if we watch ourselves with an humble desire to acknowledge the mercy of God, and His workings in us, we shall perceive that such bitter moments do become fewer, and all that lie between them insensibly calmer.

SEVENTH LETTER.

Hitherto you have reckoned the *age* of your sorrow as a mother that of her babe—you as grievingly as she joyfully. It was at first so many weeks old, then so many months! When the weary year is come and gone, your sad reckoning will no longer be so close. You are now beginning to reap the hard-earned benefit of habit—the habit of patient endurance—for even sorrow can become our second nature. You no longer pass through such momentary and involuntary forgettings, and such poignant rememberings—you are

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no longer liable to overlook your chain and to be plucked so inexorably back by it. This is the time when you have perhaps more tears, but less oppression — when an atmosphere of other things, all painful may be, has glided in between you and the sharp outline of your agonizing memories : when you are being gradually delivered “from the pressure of the Past.” It is not that our sorrow then becomes less — on the contrary, it is when we begin to walk more steadily beneath our cross, that we are more aware of its

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real weight, than when it was always escaping from our galled grasp. We will not talk of "Comfort" even yet, in the sense so glibly promised, but we are conscious that our cross does sometimes lie quiet, and resting on *The Cross*: not often so—rather very seldom and fitfully; but, if we have known it to rest thus, were it only once, it is sufficient to give us the solemn guarantee that the "Soul of our souls, and Saviour of the world," is cognizant of our individual need.

Then too, you will see by degrees

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that minor things have been ordered for your benefit—have been adjusted with a mysterious sequence and harmony which, at the time, you neither noticed nor saw the purport of: that interests have arisen, sending forth the first weak, timid blades of verdure in your sere and withered heart. By degrees you will feel that the oblivion of your woe, if but for a minute, for which you at first so impatiently thirsted, is no longer so indispensable,—*that you can keep your sorrow, and yet bear your life.* From this turning

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point the anguish under which you have writhed gradually begins to grow precious—to be, in a manner, your own—a sacred substitute, and the only one, for your never-forgotten One. People tell you very seriously that you must put God into the place of him who has been taken from you--and thus add another to the many high sounding fallacies with which the mourner is tantalized. For if it be a sin to put the creature into the place of the Creator, it is surely worse still to attempt the converse. Christ has

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taught us that we must love the Lord our God with every higher faculty of our being—and our neighbor *as ourselves*. These are, therefore, two different kinds of love—or they would not have been so stringently and separately described,—and to attempt to put either for the other is as senseless as it is profane. Leave, therefore, all straining at such uncompassible abstractions. Thanks be to God, our hearts are elastic, or we could never fulfil His great Law of love to those made in His image. Yet even

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this Love,—Philanthropy—though expanded to the utmost, will never fill the vacant niche. No one being, or number of beings, ever really takes the place of another.

And by this time we shall have acquired a knowledge of our fellow creatures of which only experience could convince us. A time of trouble is the test of what is ordinarily called friendship. It acts like a solvent which erases certain characters we had fondly deemed indelible, while it brings out others with a radiance for which

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we were equally unprepared. Few emerge from the dark pass of affliction with the same circle of supposed friends with which they entered it. But we shall have suffered to little purpose unless we have learned to bow to all that belongs to our trial—to prize those who have bided its test, and to judge leniently of those who have fallen before it. For, above all, the time of trouble is the test of *ourselves*.

“ Not noble then is never so,
Either in this world or the next.”

If we advance not heaven-ward then,

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we never shall—if we emerge not from that pass with gentler and humbler hearts, and with an indulgence for the faults of others founded on the better knowledge of our own, we shall have suffered the sorrow we could not escape, but not obtained that sorrow's worth.

If, therefore, I have dwelt on the apparently additional pain given to a mourner in her first bewilderment by the ignorance of some around her, it has been chiefly from the desire of convincing some stricken Sister that her case in this respect is not singular.

* * *
TO MY SISTER MOURNERS.
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But standing at a certain distance from the dark cloud which once enveloped us, and will ever, more or less, overshadow us, we can discern that in our own over-much soreness, lay, in some measure, the secret of that too little tenderness of which we were so painfully conscious. Those to whom the very sunshine and the sweet face of Nature seem cruel are not easy patients to nurse.

I have spoken of standing at a certain distance from the cloud; but there is no need to be jealous, lest, in

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the gradual dawn of a solemn, twilight peace, your sorrow should be faithless. No, that will remain the same; it is you who will be changed; bringing gradually your heart's agony into subjection to yourself, instead of being yourself in bondage to that.

And now the period approaches when one of the peaceable fruits of righteousness — resignation — may be expected to appear — the free resignation, namely, of our heart's treasure, not the negative submission of ourselves. Now our soul's compass will

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point more steadily upward—we shall walk freer from the world, kinder to our neighbour, nearer to our God—our sorrow less apparent, because closer worn. And he whose presence made life sweet, and whose absence makes it dreary, will he be forgotten? ah! no—rather remembered, if less poignantly, yet more and more ardently—for *the parting is over, and the time ever nearing for the meeting that is to come.*



And if I have not touched on this blessed prospect, it has yet underlaid

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every thought—for it is the first and the last—nature's alpha and omega—in the heart of the bereaved wife. On this great subject there is much that is known—much that may be believed—much that, with trembling reverence, and the guidance of Scripture it is permissible to hope. Should these few pages give my suffering Sisters any help on their joyless road, I may probably venture to ask them to follow me in that mysterious direction.



EIGHTH LETTER.



EIGHTH LETTER.

MANY years have now elapsed since the part called "Fellowship," which precedes these pages, was first given to the world. The interval is long, but not on that account important. For there are ever-recurring events in this mortal life, and ever-fixed laws in the human heart on which Time makes no difference. We have mourning Sisters—as we have

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the Poor—always with us, who, like poor old Jacob at sight of Joseph's bloody coat, "refuse to be comforted"—this text being doubtless in the Patriarch's time the same that for countless generations it has since continued to be—a form of expression rather than a literal truth; for we cannot be said to refuse that which it is not in our power to accept. The truth is that there are certain sorrows in which none can really sympathize who have not experienced them. The imagination even can hardly be said to contribute its part here; for

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who can imagine a totally new sensation? Youth cannot imagine old age. This is the real key—and it is only just to keep it in mind—to that absence of sympathy in which the mourner feels herself doubly isolated; and it is the key also to the lack of books which afford any comfort with understanding. Other forms of affliction—other heavy crosses—meet with a far deeper response. Most people can feel what the loss of sight, or hearing, or liberty implies; and imagination readily enhances the sense of such trials. For all people.

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generally speaking, are in the enjoyment of these blessings, and can in some measure realize what the loss of them means. But the Cross we are called upon to bear; the divided life which perpetually reminds us of what the union has been; the anguish which most of us are appointed to pass through—as all are appointed to pass through Death—*alone*—is what even the most loving wife fails to realize by anticipation. It comes upon her accordingly as an awful discovery, the real nature of which she is equally as unable to impart as others

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are to understand. The world can comprehend when widowhood is accompanied by worldly losses ; but when outward circumstances remain the same—the means undiminished, the friends true (though that is rare !), the health uninjured, and the hateful liberty greater—the uninitiated may well wonder what it is that prevents our being, after a little decorous seclusion, as happy as before.

We must accept the conditions of our state. People at first do their best in a feeble and second-hand way to cheer us ;

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but how should those be really comprehended who do not comprehend themselves? And to none are we greater enigmas than we are to ourselves. The old familiar self is gone, with its former surroundings; and we move and live within an empty shell of the past, which mocks us with its hollowness, and, like the tub of Regulus, lacerates us at every point of contact. Every former habit, no matter how trivial or innocent, turns upon us like an enemy; for every former habit strikes upon new and inexorable present conditions. It is fortunate

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for us meanwhile if we are not plied with religious formulas from which we instinctively recoil ; all good and true in proper time and place, but for our particular time and case “ most bitterly untrue.” More fortunate still if we are not credited with so perverse a determination not to accept the proffered panacea, as to make our spiritual state a greater object of solicitude than our affliction. But, to tell the wicked truth, we were never before so indifferent to our spiritual state. We are bound to bear such admonitions patiently as a

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part of the ordeal God has appointed, but there their purpose ends. Self is sick unto death, and no appeal to it in any form has the slightest power over us.

It is while we are in this condition—when the Heavens are as brass above us—that a whisper reaches us to which we eagerly turn. It is low and faint, but oh! how melodious! It is the whisper of a *Meeting again!* What mourner has not roused herself to catch these tones, and felt in them the first assurance of hope and consolation! It

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is strange how charily the promise of the blessed reunion is given at this time—or, when given at all, how jealously it is hedged round with reserves, warnings, and precautions, lest it should be too rash, too presumptuous, or too sweet. And yet, as we may now take occasion to show, there is not one of these warnings which is not flung to the winds by the clear and express words of Scripture. What did our Lord Himself do when groaning in spirit He witnessed the sorrow of Martha and Mary after the death of Lazarus? Did He caution,

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or reprove, or avoid the subject of re-union? No, thanks be to Him for His blessed example, His first and instant words were, “Thy brother shall rise again.”* He does not even endorse the words of Martha—words that have troubled many a heavy heart—that Laz-

* It is thought by some that our Lord’s words alluded only to the miracle He was about to perform. But this would assume a limit to its meaning at variance with the whole tenor of Scripture. The *miracle* was part of the Divine scheme for the benefit of the bystanders, “That they may believe that Thou hast sent me” (John, ch. xi., v. 42)—the *promise* was for all, and is we believe fulfilled at every death.

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arus will rise “at the last day”; but rejoins at once, “I am the Resurrection and the Life, whosoever believes on Me shall *never* die.”

Another warning generally in store for the mourner at these times is conveyed by the reminder that the part of the true Christian is to desire Heaven for the sake of union with God, and not for that of reunion with a poor sinful fellow-mortal. But does Holy Writ really contain such an admonition or make such a distinction? By no means. Here again our Lord’s emphatic words

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come to the mourner's help. Having just silenced the Sadducees on the very subject of the Resurrection, He is asked by a lawyer, "tempting Him," "Master, which is the great commandment in the Law?" and answers thus, "The first commandment is to love the Lord our God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength," and "the second commandment"—not placed by Christ, let us carefully mark, lower than the first, but expressly declared by Him to be "like unto it"—"is to love thy neighbor as thyself; for there is

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none other commandment greater than these." (Matt., ch. xxii., v. 39.) And again, our Lord would seem almost to reverse this position, and even to put the second commandment first; for it is written, "He who loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (St. John, ch. iv., v. 20.) Most mourners stand in need of these defensive arguments at a time when they have least spirit to defend themselves.

It is indeed strange to note the hesitation and misgiving felt by some pious

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people lest the Bereaved in their misery should dwell too gladly, gratefully, and securely on the subject of reunion ; as if it were a kind of dangerous indulgence against which we are bound to be on our guard. Nor does the well-meant admonition end here ; for, granting that the meeting again be admitted as a possibility, it is as often as not coupled with an expression of ignorance, or, at all events, of doubt, on a point, which, if true, would simply invalidate its purpose—namely, as to whether in the next life that awaits us we shall even recog-

EIGHTH LETTER.

nize each other? Happily again a Scripture answer is at hand; irresistible in comfort and logic. For what is meant, we ask, where the death of "brethren" is concerned, by being told "not to sorrow even as those who have no hope"? (Thessalonians, ch. i., v. 4.) But hope of *what*, if not of reunion? And what, again, is meant by hope of reunion if we are not intended to recognize each other? The doubt itself is a mere futility, for the one hope falls with the other, and no recognition is simply no reunion.



NINTH LETTER



NINTH LETTER.

THAT the fulfilment of such longings and hopes rests immutably upon Scripture, may well suffice for us. But there is another point of view whence we may gather a further pledge. For, in truth, we possess two sources of divine knowledge whereby we are intended to guide ourselves and help others—the one being that of Holy Writ, which we are forbid-

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den to add to or take from—the other, those yearnings and seekings by which the Gentiles were a law unto themselves. This law “by nature,” which the revealed law has confirmed rather than abrogated, is still the witness of God within us; as it was His only witness to those to whom no other revelation had been accorded. Both these are divine revelations—the earlier in no way superseded by the later. Nor does God require us to choose between them—but, if Man does, we may humbly answer that the voice within us being

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the most direct—for Scripture we know may be and has been “wrested”—has even the greater authority over the heart which gives itself to God, as clay to the potter. As Sorrow comes from the hand of the Almighty, so, we are bound to believe, do its concomitant cravings and yearnings come from Him also: they are therefore not to be regarded as mere human fancies and manifestations. He is the Lord of Sorrow, as of all things, and He has charged that sad agent with instincts and aspirations which, far from being

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wilful, capricious, or forbidden, are intended, faithfully used, to work out His holy will. That our love for our departed Ones continues at all is in itself both an augury and a promise. If its purpose ended here it would fall from us when they die, as a withered branch from a living tree. Nor is that sacred and unconquerable feeling—our love for the dead—to be considered as a machine gradually expending its power and action on *nothing* here, till it finally expires, but as a vital force working in the interest of the future, and that for-

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ever. The Faith that is watered by our bitterest tears is destined in the end to smile through them. For "Sorrows are the travail pains of eternal life in the soul."

When God, therefore, gave us the command to "love one another," He virtually pledged Himself to reunite us; otherwise the command would have been the cruellest mockery. He who made the human heart knows that love once kindled, legalized, and cherished by the Divine appointment, cannot die—that many waters cannot quench it,

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nor floods drown it—and that separation by death only increases it.

“ No lapse of time can canker love,
Whatever fickle tongues may say.”

Let us, therefore, not be unduly distressed by yearnings for the creature, which for a time seem to supersede those for the Creator. They are not, as some would have it, temptations to evil, or proofs of want of faith, but serve rather as a lure along a road of absorbing feeling and thought, which, beginning with our Beloved One, is destined to end in our God.

TENTH LETTER.

TENTH LETTER.

WE return to the subject of recognition. Among the ruling instincts of man there is none, if we examine it, more marvellous than his power of recognition. We see, under ordinary circumstances, a fellow-creature once—perhaps in a crowd—we speak together for five minutes, or perhaps not at all. We scan that little map, his face, but



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even that not consciously ; still less are we occupied in taking stock of his actual features. The next day we could not say of what color are his eyes. Nevertheless, a year later—aye, several years later—and equally without any conscious comparison between our present and former impression—we instantly know him to be the same individual. Here, therefore, is a provision the purpose of which is obvious for this world. For it is evident that all the sympathies, duties, and business of social life would be retarded, and ex-



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posed to endless risks and mistakes, if the power of recognition were in any way a matter of calculation or difficulty. If we analyze this phenomenon, we perceive that the external features have nothing to do with it; but that it resides in that Something transmitted from the imperishable Soul to the outer countenance which we call Expression— which far more than any external feature represents the individual Being; and which, once seen, claims immediate recognition from our soul in return. In this direction, therefore, we must

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seek the continuance of this instinct in the life to come, where all that is imperishable in us will be retained—a life which without it would be inferior to this. Little they know what they do who would unsettle the mourner's belief in the recognition, and, therefore, in the re-union beyond the grave—the one goal which in some form or another is ever present to her mind. For under the shelter of “the larger hope” a number of timid, artless, undefined ideas spring up, beguiling the weariness of grief; all intended to serve their time, but finally

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to be absorbed into that ever larger and larger Hope—that he who has passed from her sight and touch here may still possibly be not far from her, may still know what she does, still take interest in what befalls her. What mourner indeed does not know the secret ways, the sad-sweet ingenuities by which, unsuspected by others, she still lives on with him she loves—how his opinions, his judgments, even perhaps his weaknesses, still, under God, guide and direct her in the harassing bewilderingments of a widowed life—how his approving smile still cheers the

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barrenness of her lonely path. As in our mortal bodies Nature often supplies by degrees a loss, a deficiency, a waste ; so the widow's heart in its desolation weaves a secret, if sometimes a fanciful world which in some sort replaces the wise head, the true heart, and the strong arm no longer at her side. Let no one accuse her of rendering unto Man the things that are God's. The mourner has two Masters, her God and her husband ; and in this instance she *can* serve both, and each the better for serving the other. With the author of that treasury for a

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mourner, the "In Memoriam," she can say, "I think he dwells in Thee, and there I find him worthier to be loved." And again, let no one who does not know the suffering, condemn the sufferer (no one who does will) for not bearing her Cross in what they think an orthodox attitude. None can bear its weight for her; and she alone knows how to shift and adjust it so as best to honor the dead, to glorify God, and to sanctify herself. Nor may we for one instant admit that those on whom God's hand lies thus heavy are not *able* to work out

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His divine intention; and as little may we aver that His hand in this form of chastening lies heavy alike upon all. This is far from being the case. The shades and grades which occur in all matters of real feeling, may here be divided into two main classes—the Sorrow which is violent and transitory, and that which is deep and enduring. This last is not given to those who cannot turn it to great uses, but is rather the pledge of a power which God knows to be in us. “He does not put dross into His mill.”

It is to those dear Sisters only who are

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suffering under the deep and enduring form of Sorrow that these thoughts are humbly addressed.

At the same time far more important issues than a faithful woman's natural yearnings are at stake here. Those who would question the faculty of recognition in the Life to come strike at the root of our highest interests and aspirations ; for they strike at the root of the future life itself. For if you are not destined to recognize me, nor I you, then you and I are no longer ourselves, but other creatures, between whom no former tie ex-

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ists—then the next life, falsely so called, is not the future of this, nor this the preparation for that—then the human soul which stands at the bar of Divine Judgment is not the same that went through the probation of this world, for good or for evil—then all we have most hoped, feared, and trusted is a fable and a delusion—and then the great truths of life and immortality which Christ came to this earth to bring to light are *not* true, and you and I are *not* immortal. To this conclusion we must inevitably come, if the fact of recognition beyond the grave be questioned.

ELEVENTH LETTER.

ELEVENTH LETTER.

WE have spoken of those words of Martha's, "I know that my brother shall rise at the last day," as having troubled many a bereaved heart. In the vague way in which many—who have never felt the irresistible call to think on such matters—speak of the state and whereabouts of the Dead, it would appear that they believe that body and soul both lie

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in the grave until summoned by the last trump before the Judgment Seat. It is evident that Martha either adopted a familiar form of speech, or that she really thought what she said. The repudiation by the Protestant Church of the doctrine of Purgatory, and the consequent shyness of our clergy to touch on the subject of an intermediate State, have led to these distressing ideas, by the simple fact that they have put no others in their place. In the absence, therefore, of all authoritative teaching, a few expressions in Holy Writ, interpreted with that

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“rigid literalism absolutely fatal to all true knowledge of Scripture,” * have obtained an obstinate currency. For it is no exaggeration to say that nine-tenths of the non-thinkers on this subject contentedly accept the belief that the Dead are destined to wait till the end of time, ere life is resumed and immortality entered upon. This idea may be held unquestioned and mechanically whilst life flows smoothly on, but there comes a moment when some awful wrench—hus-

* See “Eternal Hope,” by Canon Farrar, p. xviii., preface, note.

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band from wife, child from parent—
breaks up all conventional ground ; and
when the thought that countless ages
now lie between us and those once so
near ; when the appalling feeling that
the Being, body and soul, to whom we
cleave so agonizingly, is now, and until
the end of all human things, *nothing*,
and *nowhere* ; and that, however differ-
ent the conditions, we are denied even
the common ground of existence in the
same universe with them—there comes,
we say, a moment when this feeling be-
comes absolutely unbearable. As there

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is a point beyond which the body cannot endure, so it is the same with the mind—and here we again return to those instincts implanted by God within us, and which protests against such a creed. Then we go to the only refuge; we search the Scriptures; and it will be strange if we fail to find, not sanction only, but positive authority for effectually exorcising those scraps of dead literalism, falsely galvanized into life, which have assaulted and hurt our soul. Christ's very words to Martha, "He who believes in Me shall *never* die," are emphatic

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enough for all conviction and comfort. But there are a number of other passages proving that equally as the Living die here, so do the Dead live there. What comforted the writer most, after the first terror of that frightful fiction, was our Lord's answer to the wily sophistry of the Sadducees on this very subject of the life beyond the grave. He reminds them that the Almighty had revealed Himself to Moses as the God of his forefathers the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ; and Christ adds,— what is nothing less than a stern reproof

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that they should so far have lost the true faith as to require to be told,—that “God is the God of the living, not of the dead.” We have also that chief authority for the distorted creed of Purgatory, Christ’s descent into Hades, where the spirits of those who lived before the flood, mentioned in that mysterious passage, though, in some sense, “in prison” (1 Peter, chap. iii., v. 19), were at all events alive. There is then an intermediate state for living human creatures, where the Patriarchs are—where David is, of whom St. Peter says

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that he is “not ascended into the heavens” (Acts, chap. ii., v. 34)—where the good thief is, to whom our Lord promised Paradise, as “this day”—where “the cloud of witnesses,” evidently referring to the Patriarchs, Prophets, and Saints enumerated in same chapter, “of whom the world was not worthy” (Hebrews, chap. ii., v. 38), all are—where “the glorious company of the Apostles,” “the goodly fellowship of the Prophets,” and “the holy army of Martyrs,” whom our daily service declares to be alive, and praising God, all

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are—and where, in short, that great multitude whom no man can number, who have passed from this earth, are gathered together ; of whom we know little more than that they are all alive.

But is this really all that we do know, or may humbly and yet boldly gather, of the hosts collected together in some intermediate state—namely, and only, that they are alive? There is a spurious reverence—doing small homage to the Almighty—which is shocked at the semblance of what it calls “speculation” on subjects supposed to be hidden from us.

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But speculation, often falsely so called, is of two sorts; there is that which has conjured up and promulgated false ideas, and there is that which in turn throws them off and fills up their places with something more sympathetic to the human heart, and more consonant with the tenor of Scripture. To those with a solemn and recent stake in the unknown world ideas of some kind will and must occur. For the inexorable absolute-ness of the earthly separation is only slowly and painfully realized; and, as we know that our loved ones cannot re-

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turn to us, our hearts, by a law stronger than themselves, involuntarily try to follow them. The more also we seek that resignation under their loss which every Christian is bound to obtain, the more necessary is it for us to believe that our loss is their gain, and that they are happy even though temporarily separated from us. And it is because the attempt is made to deny us that consolation, that our souls involuntarily rise up in rebellion against the intolerable pictures thrust upon us by those most ready to condemn us for "speculating,"

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or, in other words, for thinking at all on these subjects. We are told, it is true (1 Cor., ch. ii., v. 9), that "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those that love Him." But surely these words—usually interpreted as alluding to the next life—point to "things" not so much alien and foreign to our human conceptions, as too beautiful and glorious for them; and therefore to be taken as doubly opposed to ideas infinitely too low even for our human standards. For while the sim-

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plest minds can perceive that every form of God's infinite creation, from the glories of the heavens above to the wonders of the smallest insect or flower beneath, is so constituted as to supply boundless matter for work, study, and praise—and that, to those who patiently and reverently work out the primal command to “subdue the earth,” the *continuity* of God's system throughout the universe is plainly revealed—it is difficult to follow the reasoning of such pious minds as think they honor the Creator by restricting the conception of the next life to the mo-

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notony of their favorite definition—
“one eternal Sabbath”—who create a
dreary void with no continuity of the
divine laws, as seen here—with no recog-
nitions of men or things, and therefore
with no human interests, and with *no*
work,—and call it Heaven.

TWELFTH LETTER.

TWELFTH LETTER.

THE word “reasoning,” just used in our last letter, may give umbrage to those who strangely protest against the use of the human reason, or of common sense in matters of religion. But, as Bishop Butler has said, “Reason is the only faculty whereby we have to judge of anything, even of Revelation itself”; and if our powers of reasoning be needed

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for every important question in this life. they are surely required not less, but more, for those questions which are the most important of all. The Scriptures themselves too, far from eschewing the dictates of this transcendent faculty, may be said to be saturated with it; while St. Paul's epistles, especially, though they include things "hard to be understood," contain more common sense than any other work in the world.

But to turn from arguments, which will still be condemned as "speculative," to those which all alike may accept,

trust, enlarge, and rest upon to any extent, is there anything so inexhaustibly interesting to the mourner, whether taken in its direct or indirect testimony on this subject, as the 15th chapter of the 1st Book of Corinthians? What closer connection, continuity, and interdependence can be imagined than that between the seed we sow, whether "of wheat, or some other grain," and "the body" which it pleases God to raise from it? The seed can but give birth to "its own body," and that "not quickened except it die." Nothing, therefore,

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so sure as that wheat will only bear wheat, or barley, barley—with no possibility of mistake or confusion—nor also so sure as that your body and my body, when dead, will only bear your soul and my soul. Herein is that identity, on which we have dwelt, assured, and yet an identity under the utmost divergence of conditions. For the whole range of nature can hardly present a greater disparity than that between the humble and insignificant little seed and its always beautiful offspring; for even the commonest plant is a wonder. When we con-

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sider that this parallel and analogy is to hold good for our Beloved Ones, we need no further proof either of the preservation of their identity, or of the splendor of their transformation. And we may believe that the parallel will hold good even in the gradualness of the change. The living germ pierces the ground but slowly; the flower of the field may be weeks before it blooms; the oak of the forest generations before it reaches maturity. All God's operations whether in nature or grace are slow. Thus we are not to expect that the "just man" is

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“made perfect” by the stroke of a wand
Were that the case, our identity, upon
which so much depends, would be en-
dangered. “For a sudden transforma-
tion would not be a glorification, but a
falsification of the mind and frame as
they existed here.”

What our outward semblance, habits,
language, etc., are to be, when mortality
has put on immortality, and corruption
incorruption, we are not told ; or rather,
only negatively ; being allowed in some

* See late Professor Grote—*Contemporary Re-
view*, August, 1871.

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measure to judge what they will *not* be. There is, for instance, not the slightest indication in Scripture that we are to assume ghostly or immaterial aspects. Flesh and blood, as we know, cannot inherit the Kingdom of Heaven ; but there is no hint that flesh and blood are to be replaced by anything unsubstantial, or even strange. “There is an earthly body, and there is a spiritual body” (1 Cor., chap. xv., v. 44); but both, let us observe, *bodies* ; and, as the angels are described as “excelling in strength,” so we may infer that our spiritual bodies,

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which, like theirs, are incorruptible, may excel in strength likewise. That they will be perfect—that those who have here borne the Cross of defective senses, and of other human ills, will have their eyes and ears opened, even as the Saviour opened them here—that the lame will walk, and the sick be restored—is a creed of which Faith may be certain.

Some people have a strange dread of being thought too human in their conceptions of the next life, and accordingly start aside from every image which can recall this material world; by which

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they greatly overlook and underrate the fact that the human nature which our Lord took upon Himself here was carried away with Him above, and there continues to be the pledge of His sacrifice, the model for our example, and the guarantee for our union with Him both here and beyond. There are also curious and significant signs in Scripture—perhaps too little brought forward—of His recognition and acknowledgment of our humanity, even from His heavenly dwelling. No disdain for its nature—no forgetfulness of its habits. That in

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His great humility He should have submitted to the conditions of men while walking among them, may be thought the necessary concomitant of His divine mission; but that, after His Resurrection, when "all power in heaven and earth" had been given to Him, He should still have acknowledged His human nature—sitting at meat with men, and talking familiarly with the old love and interest—and, further, that after His Ascension, when He appeared to Saul in a flood of light which blinded the prostrate man, He should have addressed

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him, not in mystical or transcendental terms, but in the language of a common Eastern proverb, quoted by Æschylus, “It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks”—that He should also, with a careful particularity, have directed Ananias to enquire for the blind man at a certain house of a certain street in Damascus, “Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one Saul” (Acts, chap. xii., v. 11)—that our glorified Lord should have condescended to retain such minute fellowship with the trivial ways



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of fallen men seems an incontrovertible proof that our poor human forms of speech—like our poor human selves—are not, and will not be thought too base for heavenly uses. Indeed, except in the case of the Burning Bush, and the vision of Ezekiel, most of the supernatural manifestations to men narrated in Scripture are seen in a human form. It is so with the recorded apparitions of angels. They come and go, and are described as “men.” The Angel of the Lord who came upon the sleeping Peter in the prison at Damascus, acted towards



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him just as a fellow-man would have done. He smote Peter on the side to wake him, and then raised him up, saying: "Arise up quickly; gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals"; and so he did. And He said unto him: "Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me" (Acts, chap. xii., v. 7 and 8). Nothing was omitted to fit the humble Apostle to leave the shelter of the prison and resume his place among his friends.

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AND may we not here also, without even an approach to profaneness, or to that presumption of drawing upon the imagination which may rightly be branded as “speculation,” may we not here go farther still, and maintain that garments of some kind will form part of the accessories of the next life? That the angels are clothed, and that the clothing par-

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takes of the glory in which they live, is expressly told. Cornelius said, describing the angel who visited him, "Behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing" (Acts, chap. x., v. 30). And of the women just hastening from the empty sepulchre it is told, "Behold, two men stood by them in shining garments." The same glory, at the transfiguration, attended the earthly raiment of our Lord, which became "white and glistening"; and again, "whiter than any fuller could make them." Nor are we to suppose that Moses and Elijah, who appeared

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with Him, were without clothing; though assuredly with none of earthly make. The immortal life is nowhere hinted at as a return to a state of Innocence. That would be leading us backward instead of forward. The origin of clothing for man in the sacred volume is accompanied by strange and significant revelations. For whoever looks closely into the narrative of man's disobedience, will perceive that, though the clothes—"coats of skins," which God made for the guilty pair—were the badge of their fall and their shame, yet, in another and

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mysterious sense, they were the signs of man's advance, clandestine as it was, into a higher state, where he had become "as one of us: to know good and evil" (Gen., chap. iii., v. 22). By his forbidden act, he had passed beyond the state of innocence, still represented by our little children, who know not that they are naked, and are not ashamed to be unclothed. Nor could the transgression it would seem, consistently with the design of Omnipotence, be retraced. "And now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for-

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ever," the Lord drove him out of the Garden of Eden, and made him subject unto death. There is nothing irreverent, therefore, or "speculative," in believing that clothing of some kind will be our condition in our translated state. Here, it represents the line of demarcation between man and the animal; there, it may indicate a race who, like the angels, have the knowledge of good and evil, and yet preserve their immortality.

We are so constantly reminded, both from within and from without, of the corruption of our nature that we run the

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risk, from an exaggerated humility, of undervaluing the place which the Being who was made in God's image still holds in the Eternal designs. We know that our race is fallen, and that the heart of man is desperately wicked—we know too that, by an indissoluble law, that which we sow here will be reaped beyond; still, we must be careful not to depreciate the importance in the sight of God of that human family for whom Christ left the Glory of the Father, and whom He came to this earth to teach, to comfort, and to redeem. Such depreciation

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is presumption, rather than humility. It thus pleased Him to give our race a rank which it cannot finally lose, and to claim for Himself rights which He will not finally forego; for it is *our* happiness, *our* salvation, which are *His* reward. It is not, therefore, for us to doubt, still less to deny, that which, under any view, is Christ's due, not ours. It is true that this "body of death," under which the whole Creation groans,—with its short opportunities, miserable inheritances, unchangeable lots, and utter helplessness for millions from birth

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to death,—presents a world to the gaze of the Creator in which, for the most part, wrecks and ruins are mingled with the rudiments and remains of better things—blighted growths, cankered buds, and, at most, half-blown flowers. The greater number of God's creatures, as a rule, never develop the powers He has given them—some, not at all—none entirely. Man is an anomaly from his birth; with two natures warring within him, one of which looks down upon the other. This anomaly can never be perfected here. Still, such as it is, Christ

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has purchased and paid for it. Are we then to believe that His purposes are to be frustrated? the travail of His Soul defeated? Can there be any *waste* with One who turns even every fallen leaf to purposes of fresh life? and waste, or at least want of completion, of His most precious materials? From time to time He sends us grand and gifted beings (like Gordon)—faint patterns of what we might and may become—who hasten the coming of His Kingdom: for, under His providence, all human advance is wrought out by human means. But

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even these, in one sense, cannot utilize all their powers; for some noble creatures could fill several lives with their heart and intellect, instead of only one. There remains, therefore, for the human race, we may venture to believe—according to the measure of their infinitely varied responsibilities—a suffering, a repenting, a retrieving, a repairing, a progressing, a ripening, a purifying, a perfecting, in a world beyond this; to be effected perhaps, as here, by human agencies: where human powers, under the Divine counsels, will organize, and hu-

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man love administer, and human accessories surround—a world where humanity will be the key-note, and perfectly developed humanity the highest standard; and yet where Christ shall be all in all: for He is Human, and He is our life.

The very terms of Scripture would seem to point to the conclusion that the conditions of our race are to be maintained in Eternity; we are told that our human nature is to be developed until it reach that of the "*perfect man*" (Ephesians, chap. iv., v. 13), and our place of abode to be no sphere of strange or even

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angelic elements, but “*a new earth*” (2 Peter, chap. iii., v. 13). It is true we are told also that the children of God shall be “equal unto the angels” (Luke, chap. xx., v. 36); but this it would seem refers to the line immediately preceding—“neither can they die any more”—and not to our assuming the nature of angels.

Let us not therefore be too ready to decry that humanity which God at first made compatible with the image of Himself; and on which, thanks to Him through Christ, it still may sometimes be discerned. What more noble and inter-

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esting than human nature divested of its imperfections! What more glorious or beautiful than this earth renewed in that form which He pronounced to be “very good!”

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THE writer has now endeavored to fulfil the promise made at the end of "Fellowship" as to that "Meeting again" the hope of which sheds the first ray of light on the mourner's darkness. She has herself gone through every phase of that long and sore illness called Bereavement, and now, from a quiet pinnacle of Peace, recalls equally those arguments which

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comforted her during the weary struggle, and those which acted in a contrary way. Guided, as far as her powers permit, by the light of Scripture and of reason, she has sought to dissipate the false fears, to exorcise the unworthy scruples, to banish the baseless conjectures, and, not least, to defend that precious inheritance of humanity which, wherever placed in the coming life, will make that place a *Home*. Meanwhile we must bear lovingly with those who, not being acquainted with such grief, truly know not whereof they speak. It is not all their fault, as we

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have endeavored to explain. They think us unreasonable, and we feel them to be cruel. But a deep mourner is a great interruption to the usual habits and tone of daily life. She cannot rise to the social temperature of others, and they cannot be expected to sink to hers. With our depressing looks, joyless ways, and rejection, tacit or open, of much that others take for granted, we are difficult subjects to deal with. But while enduring the well-meant prescriptions of our Job's comforters, let us not forget that we ourselves have more to learn of the true

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“uses of adversity” than we have hitherto imagined. Sorrow is a Force of incalculable power; able, rightly applied, to “move mountains.” Is such a Force not meant to have a proportionate object and end? Whether we will or no, we are in its inexorable grasp, and to rebel against it equally as to succumb weakly to it, is only to drag a tightening chain. It is for us to choose whether to spend this awful Force in sighs and tears and vain lamentations for that which can never be ours again here, or to invest it in what will repay us a hundredfold both

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here and beyond. We are told by those who have passed through the ordeal that we are never the same after that we were before it, and whichever way we take it that is truly the case. Let us therefore pray that it may leave us not only different to what we were before, but “a new creature.” Rightly viewed, Sorrow is a gift as much as our wealth and our health; and we must as much prepare to be asked what we have done with the one, as how we have used the others. For Sorrow is as fruitful of graces as Charity herself. Through the tribulations she



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brings we enter into the kingdom of heaven—through her chastenings we know that God loves us—the spirit she breaks and the heart she renders contrite are God's acceptable sacrifices. Sorrow competes with charity in the race for the crown of righteousness. Like her she suffereth long, and is kind—beareth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Is it a small matter to be thus lifted above the trumpery of this world? to be made indifferent to its temptations? to be weaned from the love of life? to feel self obliterated within us? to care

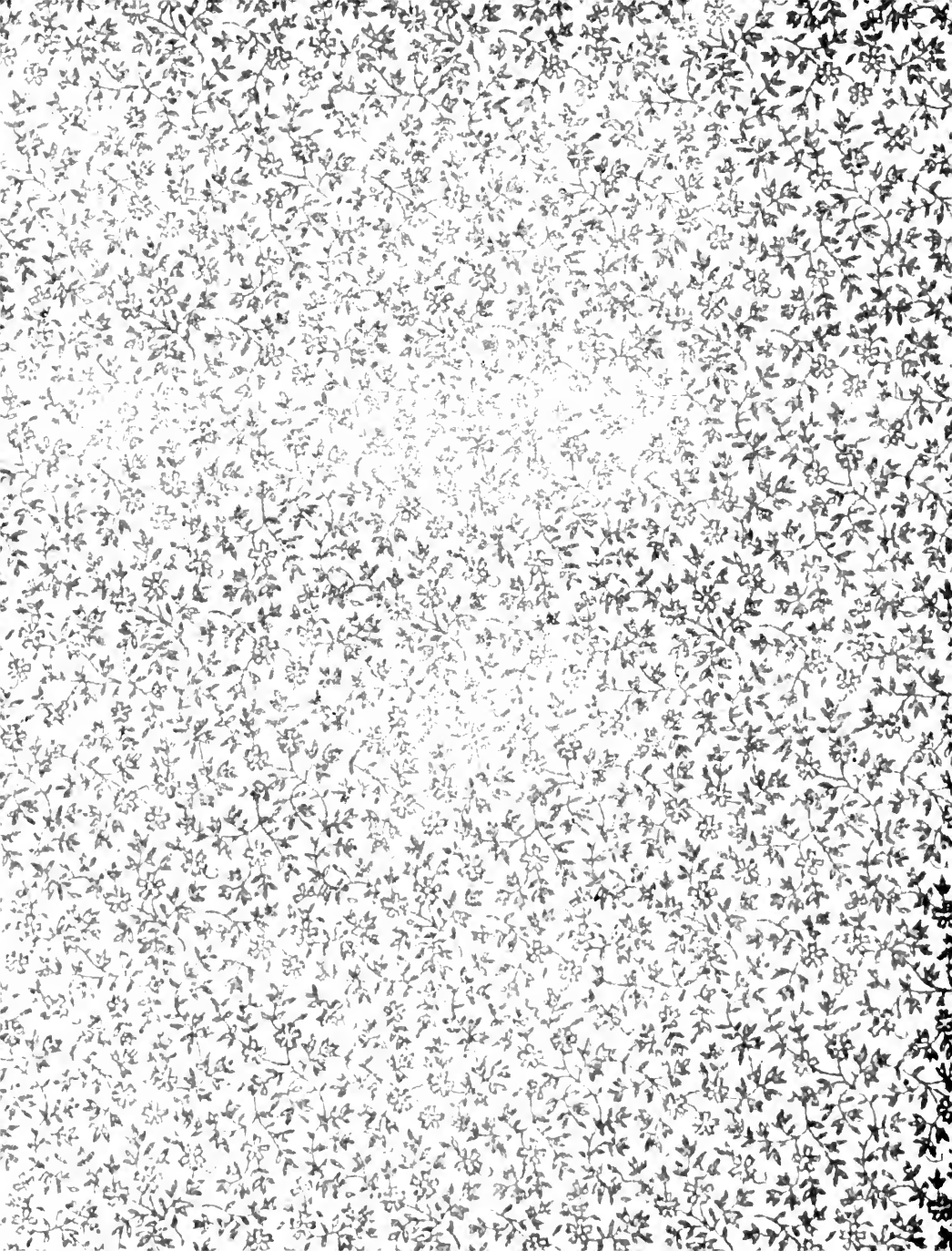


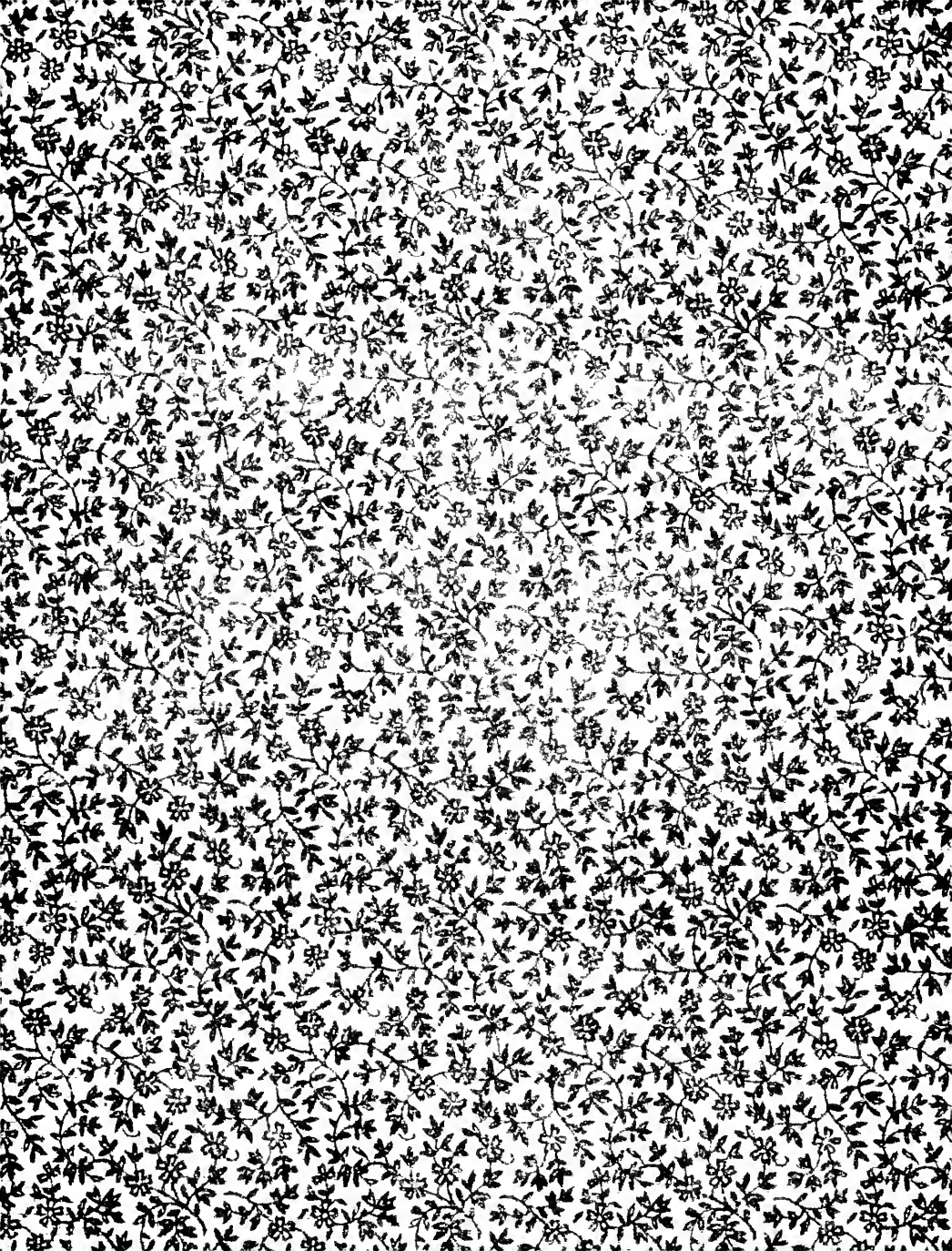
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most to solace the afflictions of others, thankful that our own have taught us the way? to realize that it is a privilege to forgive injuries, and a luxury to return good for evil? All these things it is given to Sorrow, slowly but surely, to bestow on those who patiently and earnestly seek to sanctify her—to the praise and glory of the God whom we serve, and to the honor of him whom we mourn.







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