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# TRACTS FOR THE TIMES.

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## COURAGE !

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BY GAIL HAMILTON.

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What do we civilians mean by talking about being discouraged? If the army were so, we might, perhaps, not be surprised. Home-loving men, long away from home, and repeatedly disappointed in every prospect of a speedy return; peace-loving men, seeing before them no termination of the war; quiet and comfort-loving men, exposed to repeated and severe hardships; intellectual and intelligent men, cut off from the pursuits of literature and life;—who would have any right to wonder or reproach, if they should, in the bitterness of heart engendered of repeated repulses, delays and disappointments, be occasionally and momentarily almost willing to give up everything for the sake of peace and home once more? But when we, able-bodied men and women, who have not, as yet, made a single sacrifice of personal comfort for the war; who have never, for one single moment, gone cold, or hungry, or thirsty for country's sake; when we sit comfortable over our registers, and by our "McGees," in our rocking chairs, with newspapers and new books, and a turkey for Christmas in the kitchen, and talk about being disheartened, I think we play the fool. Let us tear up our carpets to make blankets for the soldiers, as rebels have done; let us turn our houses and churches into hospitals; let us confine ourselves to two meals a day, and one course at a meal, and no butter to our bread; let us wear old shoes clouted upon our feet, and old garments, and only linsey woolsey for new; let us shiver a little, and famish a little, and be a little shabby, before we begin to give the rein to our despondency. Let us be quite sure that we have done something for national honor before we talk about being discouraged from doing anything more.

And without waiting to make sacrifices, I do wish people would stop talking dolefully, and never begin again. Lacon says it is easier to bear our misfortunes than the comments of our friends upon them. Electricity never hurts anything so long as a cloud sails on quietly alone ; but the moment it bumps against another cloud, out leaps the lightning and does mischief. If, when people feel low spirits coming on, they would take a walk, or go down cellar and stay, or put themselves out of sight somewhere, and keep out of sight till the fit is over, I think they would do great good to their country. I have not the slightest respect for the patriotism that shows itself by a dejected countenance. Of course, temperament has much to do in this thing. One person will be deeply depressed where another will be calm and cheerful. But call it temperament. Don't call it patriotism, or superior sensibility. And if you have a hard fight to be cheerful, rejoice that you can have the battle by your own hearth-stone, and show there that you do not shrink from conflict. Discouragement will melt away if it is not pampered ; but if you go with a melancholy face to somebody, his face will answer to yours, you will put your two burdens together, and roll up such a load as is dismal to think of. I believe the late affair at Fredericksburg derived half its gloom-diffusing power from the people's telling each other how dreadful it was. Never say things look very dark, unless you have good reason to suppose your saying so will lighten them a shade or two.

I can understand that very ignorant Atheists should be hopeless regarding this war. But people who have a knowledge of this world's history on the one side, or of God on the other, are without excuse. True, leaders may be incompetent, generals may blunder, avarice, jealousy, greed, and all manner of selfishness, may seem to push our cause on to certain shipwreck ; but do you suppose that the Lord God Almighty is going to be stopped in his course by the non-arrival of a pontoon bridge? I am astonished at the amount of practical infidelity developed among Christians. From the manner in which many talk and look, it would seem as if God was not in all their thoughts. Nobody expects time-servers to look higher than Tammany for machinery and results ; but the people who profess to worship God, the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, might be expected to possess their souls in patience. It seems to us that the God

whom many of us worship is after our own image and likeness—a God sufficient in peace, while everything goes smoothly, but rather taken aback by a sudden outburst of war—a God adequate to the government of the world in ordinary times, but quite out of his reckoning in these tumultuous days. We can trust him to give us day by day our daily bread, but we have not the least confidence in his ability to cope with Stonewall Jackson and Gen. Lee. I know that God works by means, and if Gen. Burnside should say, “God will take care of his cause,” and should, therefore not post pickets, or watch the enemy, he would deny the faith, and be worse than an Infidel; or if we should say it, and therefore cease to pray and to work, in every possible way for the cause, we should be the same; but I, and most of those who read this paper, have no more influence over the management of troops at Vicksburg, the disposition of forces in Virginia, the furnishing of plans or material anywhere, than Daniel had over the lions. We have the same call for trust in God that he had. Things undoubtedly looked very dark when the Israelites stood fronting the sea, with the Egyptian Cavalry hard after them; but the sea returned and covered both chariots and horsemen. Things must have looked dark to the Jews when the Assyrian host sat down before their city, but in the morning they were all dead corpses. Those were Bible times, miracle times; but is the Lord’s arm shortened that He cannot save, or his ear heavy that he cannot hear? True, we cannot be sure that He is on our side, but we can at least be sure that we are on His. We talk of our country, and it is ours—just as Paul’s house was his. The earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof. This country belongs to God. It was His when a forgotten people held it—His when it passed into the hands of the Indians—His when our fathers dwelt here, and His to-day. If the Lord can afford to let it go, I rather think we can. If his cause can be better served by giving it over a while to dead men’s bones and all uncleanness, it shall be given. Possibly, God sees that the only way by which we will be led to the truth is a *reductio ad absurdum*. He will let us have another pull at slavery, selfishness and wicked prosperity, or perhaps let us try anarchy, and division, and humiliation a while, till we shall be ready to return to Him. I hope not. We ought to strive that it may not be necessary. I only say that if worse comes to worst, we should not put on mourning, as if the earth were orphaned of its Maker.

One talks of intervention, another of dismemberment, a third of compromise, and men's knees smite one against another for fear ; but He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh. The Lord shall have them in derision. He is greater than Vallandigham. He is stronger than both the Woods'. He is wiser than the *New York World*. He moves through all the clash of arms. He sits above every political caucus. Opposition will go just as far as He wills, and no farther. Army contractors and unprincipled officers are His instruments. He makes even the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder he will restrain.

400,000 Israelites went up against 26,000 Benjaminite swordsmen and 700 sharpshooters, and were twice shamefully repulsed with terrible slaughter. Then they came to their senses. In the first place they went forth with a high hand and a stretched-out arm, asking haughtily of the Lord, "Which of us shall go up first to the battle against the children of Benjamin?" But after the pride had been thoroughly beaten out of them, they wept and sat before the Lord, and fasted, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and then asked humbly enough, "Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother, or shall I cease?" Benjamin my brother—they had quite forgotten that little matter of relationship in the beginning ; but having returned to the Lord, and put themselves under His guidance, they went up the next time to decisive and complete victory.

If we do not conquer this rebellion it will be an indellible disgrace upon us, but the truth will not be disgraced. Every individual who does all in his power to conquer it, will share in the shame, but not in the sin. The fact that God works with all who work for Him, should be at once our shield against despondency, and our inspiration to effort. Whether we fail, or whether we succeed, His plans never fail. Sooner or later, by us or by somebody else, the earth shall be redeemed, and Christ shall reign.—*From the Congregationalist, Boston, Jan. 27th, 1862.*