

THE TROUBLES OF LIFE ;

BEING A FAMILIAR DESCRIPTION OF THE TROUBLES OF

The Poor Laborer,
The Little Shopkeeper,
The Great Tradesman,
The Sickly Man,

The disappointed Lover,
The Unhappy Husband,
The Widower ; and lastly,
The Child of Sorrow.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

The STORY of the GUINEA and the SHILLING,

Being a Cure for TROUBLE in General.



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THE TROUBLES OF LIFE, &c

“**M**AN is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.” It is not every one however believes this melancholy truth. Young people especially are apt to imagine that the world is full of pleasure and enjoyment; their hearts beat with expectation as they enter into it; and they seldom calculate on trials, losses, and disappointments. I propose here, in the first place, to present to my young and sanguine readers the picture of a few of the chief troubles of life.

Let us first describe the case of a person in low and declining circumstances.

THE POOR LABORER.

READER, thou art one, as I will suppose, who heretofore, by dint of hard work, didst provide thyself with bread, but now thy family has grown large; thy wife, dear woman! has brought thee twins last year; thine own health also has begun rather to decline, so that as thy charges increase, thy means of living grows smaller and smaller—thou art not yet reduced to actual want, but thou art in dread of it for the slender stock which thou hast got together is now wasting day by day: already poverty begins to stare thee in the face; already thou hast pawned a spoon, or a piece of less necessary furniture, perhaps a Sunday-coat, and in another week thou must part with thy wife's cloak, and perhaps another blanket also; thou dost hope indeed to redeem the more needful articles, but it is very doubtful whether thou wilt ever do it; thou seemest to be descending gently by the same way that many have trod before thee, down into the workhouse, or, if some friendly hand forbid not, perhaps into a dreadful jail.

We will now draw a picture of that distress to obtain a living which is common in a little higher life.

THE LITTLE SHOPKEEPER.

It may be thou art one, who having married a year or two ago, didst then set out merrily in the world, in some little shop, fitted up on the occasion, and every pound, as thou didst then calculate, would produce by this time another pound, by due diligence in thy calling. The little substance which thy deceased father left thee, and thy wife brought thee, were put together for a capital, from which were to arise these ample profits of the shop, but alas! the war has happened, trade is grown dull—thou hast gone into it at a wrong time, or hast chosen a wrong branch of commerce; thou didst turn dealer in silks, just when when the silk trade began declining; in gauzes which went out of fashion in the same year, or in hair powder, and now the use of it is taxed: or thou hast hired, perhaps, a large house for the sake of having with it a better shop, meaning to let a part in lodgings, and to live with thy little family in one snug corner of it: but thou hast failed in getting lodgers; thou wast obliged the other day to borrow a small sum of an old trusty friend, but under promise of secrecy, lest it should hurt thy credit; yetsterday thou didst apply to a second friend, but he was low in purse, he was borrowing at that time himself, or he was engaged just then, in short he did not care to trust thee—thou must try a third friend to-day, and if he fails thee, thou must break perhaps to-morrow; thou hast been going on for months in the same daily dread of bankruptcy, and yet thou art counted to live in comfort,

for thou carriest about with thee a cheerful look, in thy face sits smiling plenty and ease, and comfort, and satisfaction, and thy shop shines with its usual lustre—for it is thus thou dost bear thy part with many others, in spreading over the world an outward shew of happiness, but at the same time there is grief, and pain, and gnawing care, and fear and error in thy heart.

Nor ought we to think that all those are free from keen anxiety whose bread, comparatively speaking is very sure, for imaginary wants may be the cause of real misery.

THE GREAT TRADESMAN.

Observe that great and once thriving trader, he had saved awhile ago ten thousand pounds—but in the last year he has gone back in the world; some new patent has been invented; some cheap shop has risen up; some unexpected rival has entered the town—he feels almost as much at the dropping off of his trade, as if he was suffering with actual hunger. To be thrown, as he calls it, out of his former bread, to see the downfall of his once reputable and thriving shop, to part also with his pleasant country box, and to sell his new horse and whisky, and to retire, in short, with only eight or ten thousand pounds in hand, instead of the expected twenty, is one of the most hard and trying cases, as he gravely tells you, that ever was experienced.

But let us draw another picture of human misery.

THE SICK MAN.

Thou art one perhaps on whom money flows apace, but thou art of a very sickly constitution. Alas! all thy wealth cannot purchase for thee a healthy body—it cannot soothe thy pain, or stop

course of thy disorder; physicians are called in, but it is in vain—they do but send thee from place to place in search of health—thy schemes in life too are all now broken, for thy life itself is in danger. Once thou didst hope to see many days, and to marry some woman of thine acquaintance, whose image is still haunting thy imagination, and to be the joyful parent of children, but this sad disorder has dashed all thy hopes to pieces—though rolling in wealth and in the prime of life, in the moment of attaining every thing which thy fond heart could wish, the cup of happiness is snatched from thy lips, and thou art driven away to an untimely grave.

THE DISAPPOINTED LOVER.

But thou art one perhaps that is crossed in love, with warm, and eager, and impatient affection thou pursuest one who neglects, avoids, or even despises thee—perhaps she loved or seemed to love thee once, but she has lately jilted thee; or perhaps she loves thee still, but prudence forbids the match; friends have interfered strongly with their authority, and the obedient girl has kindly, though resolutely, entreated thee to take leave of her for ever. Thou art confident, nevertheless, in thine own mind, that if she were partner of thy lot, thou couldst bear any state of life with pleasure—poverty would be no poverty, pain itself would lose its nature in her beloved society, but without her, life is insupportable, and that death, which others dread, is become the very object of thy gloomy wishes and expectations.

THE UNHAPPY HUSBAND.

But now, to reverse the picture, thou art one perhaps who in the fondness and eagerness of youth hast married the very object of thy choice. O, what

a happy man! what an enviable, lot is thine! But in a little time the charm is broken; Beauty soon fades; a horrible temper also, quite unperceived at first, is broken out. She whom thou didst look up to as an angel, is become a very fury, quarrels distract thy family day by day; and the very partner of thy life has become thy grief, thy shame, and thy torment; thou must now pay the forfeit of thy imprudence, by bearing this worst of burthens for all thy remaining days—nay, thou must also bear it in silence, lest thy shame should be published so much the more, and lest thy wife's ill temper should be worked up even to frenzy, if thou shouldst make the smallest complaint.

“ But why will you describe human life so gloomily? perhaps some reader may reply, for my part I have a wife, who instead of being such a woman as you have painted, is most exemplary and affectionate and kind.” We will now draw another picture of human calamity.

THE WIDOWER.

Observe that wife, so pleasing in her person, so cheerful also in her temper, so valuable as the industrious and clever parent of her many children, and so attentive and affectionate also to her husband. Early love united them, unreserved intimacy has endeared them still further, and a long connection has rendered them now quite needful to each other—the husband's life is bound up in that of his wife, in a degree of which he is hardly yet aware. See her begin to sicken and to grow a little pale.—At first the disease is trifling—she has walked out in the dewy night and caught a cold, but the cough has increased, and it is now three months since that unlucky day. The tender husband begins to be alarmed. Love indeed is apt to be anxious, and she

herself begs him not to be afraid. Another month passes off, and the cough is not removed. Her pulse grows quick, her sleep forsakes her, and many dreadful symptoms ensue. What are now the feelings of this once happy husband? He walks with a melancholy look, and in a neglected dress, over the house, and he thinks his own life already too great a burthen to be borne. As the danger begins to appear, his state of suspence also is affecting beyond measure. His hope rises high with each little favourable change, and in a day or two after, he is half frantic with fear. In the mean time his own health, through long watching, begins materially to fail. And now her end draws near. That face, once so beautiful, begins to be deformed by a ghastly hue, the lips are turned pale and quivering, the tongue is parched, the very reason fails her, so that she knows not the voice of her husband, though he calls her by her name. At last a cold sweat is observed to be passing over her limbs, her eye is fixed, the last agony arrives, and she expires in his arms. O what a dreary scene does the world now present to this husband, who a few months before, was boasting of his happiness, and to this once enamoured lover!

And here let it be remarked, that this sort of event is one that is by no means uncommon. It is one which every family has to witness. Let every loving husband remember, that he has to see the day when he shall be thus separated from his wife, or else that the wife has to endure a like separation from her husband. Let him reflect that it often happens also, that in proportion as the pleasure in each other's society has been great, and the love ardent, the parting pang is found to be very severe. Scenes of a like kind are to be expected also, again

and again in life. At one time a beloved parent is in the course of nature removed; at another, a much-honoured uncle or patron, who had become a second father, now a brother or a sister, or a dear friend and companion is torn away; and now a blooming hopeful, and perhaps an only child, is hurried into an untimely grave. And so quickly does death oftentimes repeat his stroke, that perhaps the mourner has scarcely wiped away his tears for one beloved relative or child, before some tender connection is alike torn from his embraces, and buried in the same tomb.

THE CHILD OF SORROW.

But let us speak now of those who may be called emphatically the Children of Sorrow. There are some persons who seem to have every thing make against them; they have had neither the success in business, nor yet the health of other men, and they have experienced also their full share of affecting deaths in their family, and at length they meet with some additional calamity, whereby their grey hairs are brought down in sorrow to the grave. There are some mothers, of whom it may be remarked, that though they have many children, yet they never succeed in rearing them. Imagine to yourself a mother who is now poor and helpless, and a widow woman also, who has brought forth a large family of children. By the time she had reached old age, she is bereft at length of them all, broken down with age and adversity, the lamp of life feebly burning, she may be likened to the shattered trunk of an ancient tree, the root of which has still a little life in it, though the lightening has deprived it of its once flourishing branches. We sometimes hear also of a single survivor of ten or fifteen children, and if we enquire, we perhaps

find that this extraordinary mortality is to be accounted for, by there having been a taint in the blood of the family, of which taint this surviving child has also partaken, and has already suffered much pain from it, though it's death is not yet arrived. Nothing methinks can be more sorrowful and even desperate, than the lot of such a sickly, perhaps deformed, and though in some sense pitied, yet, at the same time neglected being; it seems only to have lived to bear the anguish of its disorder and to witness the mortality of its family. But it is time to break off from this melancholy subject.

We have hitherto avoided introducing any thing religious into the characters we have drawn. because we wished to paint the misery strongly which we could not have done if the comforts of christianity had made a part of the picture. We will endeavor to explain ourselves in the first place, by the following story.

THE GUINEA AND THE SHILLING.

It happened once, that a person was travelling on foot a long way from home, with exactly a guinea and a shilling in his pocket; as he walked by the side of a hill, in taking out his purse, one of the pieces dropped out, through an unlucky hole which there was in it; it proved, however, most fortunately to be only the shilling; he looked around him for the piece which was lost, with some care, but whether it had got hid in the long grass, on his right hand, or whether it had rolled off a long way down the hill to the left, or whether it had even tumbled into the river at the bottom, is what he never could discover. He spent about half an hour in looking round and round after it, 'till he began to think that he was losing more time and trouble than the piece of money was worth, so he proceeded on his day's journey, comforting himself as he

went, that he had his guinea still safe in his pocket, and that he had lost nothing but the shilling.

Let us apply the story. Reader, thou art one that hast met with some of those losses, troubles, or disappointments, which have been just described—but thou art nevertheless one of those happy persons who have embraced the Gospel of Christ with their whole heart, are made partakers of its infinite and unspeakable blessings; thou hast lost, as I will suppose, thy wealth, thy health, or thy dearest earthly relative—nay, thou hast lost every thing that can be dear to thee in this life. Be comforted, thou hast only lost thy shilling; it is merely thy temporal comforts that are gone from thee—the blessings of the gospel still remain, heaven is thine, eternity is thine, consolations which the world can neither give nor take away are still in thy possession, and thou art an heir of everlasting life. These immense riches continue with thee, and are like the guinea in hand, on which thou mayest still cast an eye of complacency, when all earthly things have slipt from thee like the shilling, and are no where to be found. I grant it may become thee to use for a while thy best diligence to repair thy loss, just as the traveller spent half an hour in searching for his shilling, but loose not the whole day of life about it, but rather pursue thy journey, comforting thyself that thou hast not lost thy guinea.

But now, to be more particular, let us shew what a new character religion gives to each of these cases we were speaking of, and first then let us again address

THE POOR LABORER.

Know then thou that art sinking through poverty, that the greatest of all the evils that can befall thee is hardness of heart. Now it is certain, that although extreme poverty may bring many

trials, yet great riches bring many more. It is riches that harden the heart. 'How hardly (say Christ) shall they that are rich enter into the kingdom of heaven.' While on the other hand, God often 'chuses the poor of this world to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven.' How does this thought at once reverse all the common notions, on this subject. 'The first Christians took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that they had in heaven a better and more enduring substance.' And the Christian of the present day, whether he be a Laborer, a Shopkeeper, or a more considerable Trader, having the same 'treasure in heaven,' will, under all his crosses, feel a measure of the same comfort. 'Having food and raiment,' said the apostle, 'let us therewith be content. I have learnt,' said he, 'every where, and in all things, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need—I can do all things thro' Christ that strengthened me.'

THE SICK MAN.

We spoke of the case of a prosperous, but dying man, who, when he is beginning to taste the cup of worldly pleasure, sees it dashed from his lips, and is hurried off to the grave. What now is wanting to comfort the mind under this sort of misery? undoubtedly the thing that is wanting to this man is the view of a nobler and better happiness in the world to which he is departing—the view of 'an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for him.'

THE DISAPPOINTED LOVER.

The man whom we describe under this character, was a worldly irreligious kind of man. Take away his irreligion, and you evidently take away much of his misery also. Teach him to view the

hand of Providence in his disappointment, teach him to love God, and to desire his favor above all things, and to be afraid of idolizing a fellow creature and his affections will now be regulated, and in a measure at least subdued. To such we add, let your moderation be known unto all men, be careful for nothing, for the Lord is at hand—finally, my brethren, the time is short—it remaineth that they that have wives were as though they had none, and they that buy as though they possessed not, for the fashion of this world passeth away.”

THE UNHAPPY HUSBAND.

We put the case of a person whom we suppose to be unhappily connected for life with a most vexatious and unsuitable partner, and who had nobody to sympathize with him in his misery: there is in the world a large class of griefs of this kind; of griefs I mean which are most deeply felt, but which nevertheless, must not be told. Now in all such cases how soothing and encouraging a thing is religion! It comes in aid, when human help fails; it teaches us in particular, that all that christian patience, which is exercised in secret, under awkward and trying, and perhaps, discreditable circumstances, is witnessed by the eye of God, and that although no honour is connected with it in this world, yet it shall in no wise lose its reward, for “our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

THE WIDOWER.

There is no case in which religion appears to more advantage than in this. I speak however on the supposition that not only the surviving husband is religious, but that he has reason to hope that so was the deceased wife also; in such case “we sor-

row not as others which have no hope, for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." It is true the body must decay, and must be carried down to the tomb: "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." But soon "the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible." Soon "this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality; and then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory—O death where is thy sting, O grave where is thy victory." That mortal part of our deceased friend, which we are lodging so mournfully in the grave, is compared in scripture to the seed which is planted in the earth, and of which the husbandman does not allow himself to regret the loss, for the joy of that future increase which is to spring from it; the seeming loss of the seed, and its burial under the earth are necessary, in order to its bursting out again; "that which thou sowest," says the Apostle, "is not quickened except it die, so also is the resurrection of the body." And how glorious is that change which it is to experience after death, "it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption, it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory, it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power, it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." Faith then believes this testimony of God, expects the promised change, understands the use and benefit of death, and even glories in it. The christian husband and his wife have many a time conversed together concerning this expected change, and it has been a chief business of their life to be prepared for it, and however favourable their lot in this world may have been, death they know will be their greatest gain: to dis

is, in this case, to be promoted to honour—it is as if, having fared but moderately at home, a man had got some good place abroad, and the earlier death of the wife, is but like the wife's setting sail to the new country, in an earlier ship, knowing that the husband is soon to follow; the parting in such case may be a little melancholy, but then the separation will be short, and if the tears begin to rise, they are presently restrained again, at the thought of the vast improvement which is about to be experienced in their fortune.

THE CHILD OF SORROW.

And now, if Christianity is so needful in the case of all those individual troubles of life, how much more so must it be when a thousand troubles meet together. Ye unbelieving men who put from you the hope of a future world, and the blessed consolations of the Gospel, come now and contemplate with me the case of that person who is oppressed with poverty, worn down at the same time with sickness, and utterly desperate as to this world.—Behold that miserable object, that wretch deformed in person as well as destitute of friends, that Lazarus, who lies at the gate full of sores, and is begging a few crumbs of bread! Go now and comfort him with those consolations which infidels have to offer to the afflicted. I suppose you will bid him hope for a little better health, and will recommend it to him to take the medicine proper for his disorder. But, alas! medicine cannot help him, for the physician has told him so. You will still perhaps encourage him to expect, however in one way or other, some more happy turn in his fortune. But his case is desperate; the friends who once took care of him, and whom he tenderly loved, are dead; his pain also his daily growing upon him, and

his disease is mortal. Well then, as it is a case of necessity, you advise him to be resigned; but resigned to what? Resigned to want and sickness, and to the loss of all things? Resigned to misery as long as he lives, and after this resigned to a gloomy and hopeless death? You give him no ground for resignation. Resignation, on your plan, is contrary to reason! You boast of your reason, but you are of all men most unreasonable, if you pretend you can supply the miserable with comfort. No, you must own the case is beyond you, and, like the Levite, you must turn your face another way, and leave him in the ditch, till some Christian comes, like the good Samaritan, and pours into the wounds the oil and wine of the Gospel.

But let us now shew how these heavy afflictions may be turned even into blessings. Ah! how many are there who, at setting out in life, have been favored with much worldly happiness, yet, during all this time, no thanks have been excited to God, who was the giver of it, but, by and by, troubles have come, and then the heart has begun to be softened—disappointed and desperate as to this world, they have turned their thoughts to a better. Worn down with grief, overwhelmed with losses, or tormented by keen anguish in their bodies, they have cast a longing look towards that world, where there is no more sickness, nor sorrow, nor pain, and where God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes.—‘Behold,’ says the Prophet, in the name of God, to the Israelites, ‘I have chose thee in the furnace of affliction’—he called these Israelites in the midst of the afflictions in Babylon, as he had their fathers in the afflictions of Egypt. St. Paul observes to the Thessalonians, ‘and ye became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, and with joy of the Holy

Ghost." Some there are who seem to have passed through troubles only that they may be brought to a state of "peace and joy in believing;" they owe that cheerfulness which you now see in them, to some former gloom. Once they were gay and thoughtless, as some of our readers may now be, and their joy was then as the cracking of thorns, which was soon over; but now there is a new foundation for their happiness. Now they trust not in riches or health, in wife or children, for they have found all these to be but as a broken reed, on which if a man leans, it shall surely fail him. They have learnt to "trust therefore in the living God," and in the sure mercy of a Saviour—being weaned from the world, they now have learnt that holy art of using it, so as not to abuse it, knowing that "the time is short, and that the fashion of this world passeth away." Come life, come death, come sickness, poverty or disgrace, come loss of friends, come trouble of whatever-kind, they stand ready. "None of these things now move them, so that they may finish their course with joy." They are now measuring the value of every thing, by its tendency to promote their eternal good, and, under whatever circumstances they may fall, they are therefore comforted by that all-sufficient promise, that "all things shall work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to the purpose."

What a new view then does the Gospel give us of the afflictions of life. It lessens some of them, and it turns others even into joy, and it teaches us to consider every one of them as appointed by that wise and Merciful Being, who knoweth our nature, and who, while he seems to visit us in judgment, is perhaps only showering down his best blessings upon us.

THE END.