### TRIALS OF LIFE.

Afflictions are Meant to Fit People for Eternity.

Comfort for Those Who are Suffering-Sorrow Always Sent in Love—Those Who Have Never Known Trouble Make Poor Comforters.

Rev. Dr. Talmage in his latest sermon tells of the awkward way of trying to comfort people in trouble, and points out a better way of dealing with broken hearts. Text: Job 16: 2: "Miserable comforters are ye all."

The man of Uz had a great many trials-the loss of his family, the loss of his property, the loss of his health; but the most exasperating thing that came upon him was the tantalizing talk of those who ought to have sympathized with him. And looking around upon them, and weighing what they had said, he utters the words of my

Why did God let sin come into the world? It is a question I often hear discussed, but never satisfactorily answered. God made the world fair and beautiful at the start. If our parents had not sinned in Eden, they might have gone out of that garden and found fifty paradises all around the earth-Europe, Asia, Africa, North and South America-so many flower gardens or orchards of fruit, redolent and luscious. I suppose that when God poured out the Gihon and the Hiddekel, he poured out, at the same time, the Hudson and the Susquehanna; the whole earth was very fair and beautiful to look upon. Why did it not stay so? God had the power to keep back sin and woe. Why did he not keep them back? Why not every cloud roseate, and every step a joy, and every sound music, and all the ages a long jubilee of sinless men and sinless women? God can make a rose as easily as He can make a thorn. Why, then, the predominance of thorns? He can make good, fair, ripe fruit as well as gnarled and sour fruit. Why so much then that is gnarled and sour? He can make men robust in health. Why, then, are there so many invalids? Why not have for our whole race perpetual leisure instead of this tug, and toil, and tussle for a livelihood? I will tell you why God let sin come into the world-when I get on the other side of the river of death. That is the place where such questions will be answered and such mysteries solved. He who this side that river attempts to answer the question only illustrates his own ignorance and incompetency. All I know is one great fact, and that is, that a herd of woes has come in upon us, trampling down everything fair and beautiful. A sword at the gate of Eden and a sword at every gate.

More people under the ground than on it. The graveyards in vast majority. The 6,000 winters have made more scars than the 6,000 summers can cover up. Trouble has taken the tender heart of this world in its two rough hands and pinched it until the nations wail with the agony. If all the mounds of graveyards that have been raised were put side by side, you might step on them and nothing else, going all around the world, and around again, and around again. These are the facto. And now I have to say that, in a world like this, the grandest occupation is that of giving condolence. The holy science of imparting comfort to the troubled we ought all of us to study. There are many of you who could look around upon some of your very best friends, who wish you well, and are very intelligent, and yet be able truthfully to say to them in your days of trouble, "Miserable comforters are ye

I remark, in the first place, that very voluble people are incompetent for the work of giving comfort. Bildad and Eliphaz had the gift of language, and with their words almost bothered Job's life out. Alas! for these voluble people that go among the houses of the afflicted, and talk, and talk, and talk, and talk. They rehearse their own sorrows, and then they tell the poor sufferers that they feel badly now, but they will feel worse after awhile. Silence! Do you expect with a thin courtplaster of words to heal a wound deep as the soul? Step very gently around about a broken heart. Talk very softly around those whom God has bereft. Then go your way. Deep sympathy has not much to say. A firm grasp of the hand, a compassionate look, just one word that means as much as a whole dictionary, and you have given, perhaps, all the comfort that a soul needs. A man has a terrible wound in his arm. The surgeon comes and binds it up. "Now," he says, "carry that arm in a aling, and be very careful of it. Let no one touch it." But the neighbors have heard of the accident, and they come in, and they say, "Let us see it." And the bandage is pulled off, and this one and that one must feel it and see how much it is swollen, and there is irritation, and inflammation, and exasperation, where there should be healing and cooling. The surgeon comes in and says: "What does all this mean? You have no business to touch those bandages. That wound will never heal unless you let it alone." So there are souls broken down in sorrow. What they must want is rest, or very careful and gentle treatment; but the neighbors have heard of the bereavement, or of the loss, and they come in to sympathize, and they say: "Show us now the wound. What were his last words? Rehearse now the whole scene. How did you feel when you found you were an orphan?" Tearing off the bandages here, and pulling them off there, leaving a ghastly wound that the balm of God's grace had already begun to heal. Oh, let no loquacious people, with ever-lasting tongues, go into the homes of

the distressed! Again, I remark: that those persons are incompetent for the work of comfort-bearing who have nothing but cant to offer. There are those who have the idea that you must groan over the distressed and afflicted. There are times in grief when one cheerful face, dawning upon a man's soul, is worth a

thousand dollars to him. Po not whine over the afflicted. Take the promises of the gospel and utter them in a manly tone. Do not be afraid to smile if you feel like it. Do not drive any more hearses through that poor soul.

Again, I remark: that those persons are poor comforters who have never had any trouble themselves. A larkspur cannot lecture on the nature of a snowflake-it never saw a snowflake; and those people who have always lived in the summer of prosperity can-not talk to those who are frozen in disaster. God keeps aged people in the world, I think, for this very work of sympathy. They have been through all these trials. They know all that which irritates, and all that which soothes. If there are men and women here who have old people in the house, or near at hand, so that they can easily reach them, I congratulate you. Some of us have had trials in life, and although we have had many friends around about us, we have wished that father and mother were still alive that we might go and tell them. Perhaps they could not say much, but it would have been such a comfort to have them around. These aged ones who have been all through the trials of life know how to give condolence. Cherish them; let them lean on your arm-these aged people. If, when you speak to them, they cannot hear just what you say the first time, and you have to say it a second time, when you say it a second time, do not say it sharply. If you do, you will be sorry for it on the day when you take the last look and brush back the silvery locks from the wrinkled brow just before they screw the lid on. Blessed be God for the old people! They may not have much strength to go around, but they are God's appointed ministers of comfort to a broken heart.

People who have not had trial themselves cannot give comfort to others. They may talk very beautifully, and they may give you a great deal of poetic sentiment, but while poetry is perfume that smells sweet, it makes a very poor salve. If you have a grave in a pathway, and somebody comes and covers it all over with flowers, it is a grave yet. Those who have not had grief themselves know not the

mystery of a broken heart. But there are three or four considerations that I will bring to those who are sorrowing and distressed, and that we can always bring to them, knowing that they will effect a cure. And the first consideration is that God sends our troubles in love. I often hear people in their troubles say: "Why, I won-der what God has against me?" They seem to think God has some grudge against them because trouble and misfortune have come. Oh, no. Do you not remember that passage of Scripture: "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth?" A child comes in with a very bad splinter in its hand and you try to extract it. It is a very painful operation. The child draws back from you, but you persist. You are going to take that splinter out, so you take the child with a gentle but firm grasp, for although there may be pain in it the splinter must come out. And it is love that dictates it and makes you persist. I once went through an ax factory,

I saw them take the bars of iron

and thrust them into the terrible fur-

naces. Then besweated workmen with long tongs stirred the blaze. Then they brought out a bar of iron and put it in a crushing machine, and then they put it between jaws that bit it in twain. Then they put it on an anvil and there were great hammers swung by machinery-each one half a ton in weightthat went thump! thump! If that iron could have spoken it would have said: "Why all this beating? Why must I be pounded any more than any other iron?" The workmen would have said: "We want to make axes out of you, keen. sharp axes-axes with which to hew down the forest, and build the ship, and erect houses, and carry on a thousand enterprises of civilization. That is the reason we pound you." Now. God puts a soul into the furnace of trial, and then it is brought out and run through the crushing machine. and then it comes down on the anvil and upon it, blow after blow, blow after blow, until the soul cries out: "O Lord, what does all this mean?" God says: "I want to make something very useful out of you. You shall be something to hew with and something to build with. It is a practical process through which I am putting you." Yes, my Christian friends, we want more tools in the church of God; not more wedges to split with. We have enough of these. Not more bores with which to drill. We have too many bores. What we really want is keen, sharp, well-tempered axes, and if there be any other way of making them than in the hot furnace, and on the hard anvil, and under the heavy hammer, I do not know what it is. Remember that if God brings any kind of chastisement upon you, it is only to make you useful. Do not sit down discouraged and say: "I have no more reason for living. I wish I were dead." Oh, there never was so much reason for your living as now! By this ordeal you have been consecrated a priest of the most high God. Go out

and do your whole work for the Mas-Again, there is comfort in the thought that all our troubles are a revelation. Have you ever thought of it in that connection? The man who has never been through chastisement is ignorant about s thousand things in his soul he ought to know. For instance here is a man who prides himself on his cheerfulness of character. He has no patience with anybody who is depressed in spirits. Oh! it is easy for him to be cheerful, with his fine house, his filled wardrobe, and well strung instruments of music, and tapestried parlor, and plenty of money in the bank waiting for some permanent investment. It is easy for him to be cheerful. But suppose his fortune goes to piece, and his house goes down under the sheriff's hammer, and the banks will not have anything to do with his paper. Suppose those people who were once elegantly enter-tained at his table get so short-sighted

ey cannot recognize him upon reet. How then? Is it so easy e cheerful?

There is also a great deal of comfort in the fact that there will be a family reconstruction in a better place. From Scotland, or England, or Ireland, a child emigrates to America. It is very hard parting, but he comes, after awhile writing home as to what a good land it is. Another brother comes, a sister comes, and another, and after awhile the mother comes, and after awhile the father comes, and now they are all here, and they have a time of great congratulation and a very pleasant reunion. Well, it is just so with our families; they are emigrating toward a better land. Now, one goes out. Oh, how hard it is to part with him! Another goes. Oh, how hard it is to part with her! And another, and another, and we ourselves will, after awhile, go over, and then we will be together. Oh, what a reunion! Do you believe that? "Yes," you say. Oh! you do not. You do not believe it as you believe other things. If you do, and with the same emphasis, why, it would take ninetenths of the trouble off your heart. The fact is, Heaven to many of us is a great fog. It is away off somewhere, filled with an uncertain and indefinite population. That is the kind of Heaven that many of us dream about: but it is the most tremendous fact in all this universe-this Heaven of the gospel. Our departed friends are not afloat. The residence in which you live is not so real as the residence in which they stay. You are afloat-you who do not know in the morning what will happen before night. They are housed and safe for ever.

Do not, therefore, pity your departed

friends who have died in Christ. They do not need any of your pity. You might as well send a letter of condolence to Queen Victoria on her obscurity, or to the Rothschilds on their poverty, as to pity those who have won the palm. Do not say of those who are departed: "Poor child!" "Poor father!" "Poor mother!" They are not poor. You are poor-you whose homes have been shattered, not they. You do not dwell much with your families in this world. All day long you are off to business. Will it not be pleasant when you can be together all the while? If you have had four children and one is gone, and anybody asks how many children you have, do not be so infidel as to say three. Say four-one in Heaen. Do not think that the grave is unfriendly. You go to your room and dress for some grand entertainment, and you come forth beautifully apparelled; and the grave is only the place where we go to dress for the glorious resurrection, and we will come out radiant, mortality having become immortality. Oh, how much condolence there is in this thought. I expect to see my kindred in Heaven-I expect to see them just as certainly as I expect to go home to-day. Aye, I shall more certainly see them. Eight or ten will come up from the graveyard back of Somerville, and one will come from the mountains back of Amoy, China, and another will come up from the sea off Cape Hatteras, and 30 will come up from Greenwood; and I shall know them better than I ever knew them here. And your friends-they may be across the sea, but the trumpet that sounds here will sound there. You will and the time of recovery shortcome up on just the same day. Some | ened-many say "stronger after morning you have overslept yourself, than before confinement." It inand you open your eyes and see that sures safety to life of both moththe sun is high in the Heavens, and you say: "I have overslept, and I must be up and away." So you will open your eyes on the morning of the resurrection, in the full blaze of God's light, and you will say: "I must be up and away." Oh, yes, you will come up, and there will be a reunion, a reconstruction of your family! I like what Haliburton (I think it was)-good old Mr. Haliburton-said in his last moments: "I thank God that I ever lived, and that I have a father in Heaven, and a mother in Heaven, and brothers in Heaven, and sisters in Heaven, and I am now going up to see them."

I remark once more: our troubles in this world are preparative for glory. What a transition it was for Paulfrom the slippery deck of a foundering ship to the calm presence of Jesus! What a transition it was for Latimerfrom the stake to a throne! What a transition it was for Robert Hall-from insanity to glory! What a transition it was for Richard Baxter-from the dropsy to the "Saint's Everlasting Rest." And what a transition it will be for you-from a world of sorrow to a world of joy! John Holland, when he was dying, said: "What means this brightness in the room? Have you lighted the candles?" "No," they replied, "we have not lighted any candles." Then said he, "Welcome, Heaven!" The light already beaming upon his pillow. Oh! ye who are persecuted in this world, your enemies will get off the track after awhile, and all will speak well of you among the thrones. Hol ye who are sick now. No medi- immense stock at once, cines to take there. One breath of the eternal hills will thrill you with immortal vigor. And ye who are lone-some now. There will be a million spirits to welcome you into their companionship, Oh, ye bereft souls! there will be no gravedigger's spade that will cleave the side of that hill, and there will be no dirge wailing from that temple. The river of God, deep as the joy of Heaven, will roll on between banks odorous with balm, and over depths bright with jewels, and under skies reseate with gladness, argosies of light going down the stream to the stroke of glittering oar and the song of angels! Not one sigh in the wind; not one tear mingling

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