

PSALM LXXXVIII.

TITLE.—A Song or Psalm for the sons of Korah. *This sad complaint reads very little like a Song, nor can we conceive how it could be called by a name which denotes a song of praise or triumph; yet perhaps it was intentionally so called to show how faith "glories in tribulations also." Assuredly, if ever there was a song of sorrow and a Psalm of sadness, this is one. The sons of Korah, who had often united in chanting jubilant odes, are now bidden to take charge of this mournful dirge-like hymn. Servants and singers must not be choosers. To the chief Musician. He must superintend the singers and see that they do their duty well, for holy sorrow ought to be expressed with quiet as much care as the most joyful praise; nothing should be slovenly in the Lord's house. It is more difficult to express sorrow fitly than it is to pour forth notes of gladness. Upon Mahalath Leannoth. This is translated by Alexander, "concerning afflictive sickness," and if this be correct, it indicates the mental malady which occasioned this plaintive song. Maschil. This term has occurred many times before, and the reader will remember that it indicates an instructive or didactic Psalm:—the sorrows of one saint are lessons to others; experimental teaching is exceedingly valuable. Of Heman the Ezrahite. This, probably, informs us as to its authorship; it was written by Heman, but which Heman it would not be easy to determine, though it will not be a very serious mistake if we suppose it to be the man alluded to in 1 Kings iv. 31, as the brother of Ethan, and one of the five sons of Zerah (1 Chron. ii. 6), the son of Judah, and hence called "the Ezrahite:" if this be the man, he was famous for his wisdom, and his being in Egypt during the time of Pharaoh's oppression may help to account for the deep bass of his song, and for the antique form of many of the expressions, which are more after the manner of Job than David. There was, however, a Heman in David's day who was one of the grand trio of chief musicians, "Heman, Asaph, and Ethan" (1 Chron. xv. 19), and no one can prove that this was not the composer. The point is of no consequence; whoever wrote the Psalm must have been a man of deep experience, who had done business on the great waters of soul trouble.*

SUBJECT AND DIVISIONS.—This Psalm is fragmentary, and the only division of any service to us would be that suggested by Albert Barnes, viz.—A description of the sick man's sufferings (verses 1—9), and a prayer for mercy and deliverance (10—18). We shall, however, consider each verse separately, and so exhibit the better the incoherence of the author's grief. The reader had better first peruse the Psalm as a whole.

EXPOSITION.

- O** LORD God of my salvation, I have cried day *and* night before thee :
- 2 Let my prayer come before thee : incline thine ear unto my cry ;
- 3 For my soul is full of troubles : and my life draweth nigh unto the grave.
- 4 I am counted with them that go down into the pit : I am as a man *that hath* no strength :
- 5 Free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou rememberest no more : and they are cut off from thy hand.
- 6 Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps.
- 7 Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted *me* with all thy waves. Selah.
- 8 Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me ; thou hast made me an abomination unto them : *I am* shut up, and I cannot come forth.
- 9 Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction : LORD, I have called daily upon thee, I have stretched out my hands unto thee.
- 10 Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead ? shall the dead arise *and* praise thee ? Selah.

11 Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave? *or* thy faithfulness in destruction?

12 Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?

13 But unto thee have I cried, O LORD; and in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee.

14 LORD, why castest thou off my soul? *why* hidest thou thy face from me?

15 *I am* afflicted and ready to die from *my* youth up: *while* I suffer thy terrors I am distracted.

16 Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off.

17 They came round about me daily like water; they compassed me about together.

18 Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, *and* mine acquaintance into darkness.

1. "*O Lord God of my salvation.*" This is a hopeful title by which to address the Lord, and it has about it the only ray of comfortable light which shines throughout the Psalm. The writer has salvation, he is sure of that, and God is the sole author of it. While a man can see God as his Saviour, it is not altogether midnight with him. While the living God can be spoken of as the life of our salvation, our hope will not quite expire. It is one of the characteristics of true faith that she turns to Jehovah, the saving God, when all other confidences have proved liars unto her. "*I have cried day and night before thee.*" His distress had not blown out the sparks of his prayer, but quickened them into a greater ardency, till they burned perpetually like a furnace at full blast. His prayer was personal—whoever had not prayed, he had done so; it was intensely earnest, so that it was correctly described as a cry, such as children utter to move the pity of their parents; and it was unceasing, neither the business of the day nor the weariness of the night had silenced it: surely such entreaties could not be in vain. Perhaps, if Heman's pain had not been incessant his supplications might have been intermittent; it is a good thing that sickness will not let us rest if we spend our restlessness in prayer. Day and night are both suitable to prayer; it is no work of darkness, therefore let us go with Daniel and pray when men can see us; yet, since supplication needs no light, let us accompany Jacob and wrestle at Jabok till the day breaketh. Evil is transformed to good when it drives us to prayer. One expression of the text is worthy of special note; "*before thee*" is a remarkable intimation that the Psalmist's cries had an aim and a direction towards the Lord, and were not the mere clamours of nature, but the groanings of a gracious heart towards Jehovah, the God of salvation. Of what use are arrows shot into the air? The archer's business is to look well at the mark he drives at. Prayers must be directed to heaven with earnest care. So thought Heman—his cries were all meant for the heart of his God. He had no eye to onlookers as Pharisees have, but all his prayers were before his God.

2. "*Let my prayer come before thee.*" Admit it to an audience; let it speak with thee. Though it be *my* prayer, and therefore very imperfect, yet deny it not *thy* gracious consideration. "*Incline thine ear unto my cry.*" It is not music save to the ear of mercy, yet be not vexed with its discord, though it be but a cry, for it is the most natural expression of my soul's anguish. When my heart speaks, let thine ear hear. There may be obstacles which impede the upward flight of our prayers—let us entreat the Lord to remove them; and as there may also be offences which prevent the Lord from giving favourable regard to our requests—let us implore him to put these out of the way. He who has prayed day and night cannot bear to lose all his labour. Only those who are indifferent in prayer will be indifferent about the issue of prayer.

3. "*For my soul is full of troubles.*" I am satiated and nauseated with them. Like a vessel full to the brim with vinegar, my heart is filled up with adversity till it can hold no more. He had his house full and his hands full of sorrow; but, worse than that, he had his heart full of it. Trouble in the soul is the soul of trouble. A little soul trouble is painful; what must it be to be sated with it? And how much worse still to have your prayers return empty when your soul remains full of grief.

"*And my life draweth nigh unto the grave.*" He felt as if he must die, indeed he thought himself half dead already. All his life was going, his spiritual life declined, his mental life decayed, his bodily life flickered; he was nearer dead than alive. Some of us can enter into this experience, for many a time have we traversed this valley of death-shade, ay! and dwelt in it by the month together. Really to die and be with Christ will be a gala day's enjoyment compared with our misery when a worse than physical death has cast its dreadful shadow over us. Death would be welcomed as a relief by those whose depressed spirits make their existence a living death. Are good men ever permitted to suffer thus? Indeed they are; and some of them are even all their life-time subject to bondage. O Lord, be pleased to set free thy prisoners of hope! Let none of thy mourners imagine that a strange thing has happened unto him, but rather rejoice as he sees the footprints of brethren who have trodden this desert before.

4. "*I am counted with them that go down into the pit.*" My weakness is so great that both by myself and others I am considered as good as dead. If those about me have not ordered my coffin they have at least conversed about my sepulchre, discussed my estate, and reckoned their share of it. Many a man has been buried before he was dead, and the only mourning over him has been because he refused to fulfil the greedy expectations of his hypocritical relatives by going down to the pit at once. It has come to this with some afflicted believers, that their hungry heirs think they have lived too long. "*I am as a man that hath no strength.*" I have but the name to live; my constitution is broken up; I can scarce crawl about my sick room, my mind is even weaker than my body, and my faith weakest of all. The sons and daughters of sorrow will need but little explanation of these sentences, they are to such tried ones as household words.

5. "*Free among the dead.*" Unbound from all that links a man with life, familiar with death's door, a freeman of the city of the sepulchre, I seem no more one of earth's drudges, but begin to anticipate the rest of the tomb. It is a sad case when our only hope lies in the direction of death, our only liberty of spirit amid the congenial horrors of corruption. "*Like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou rememberest no more.*" He felt as if he were as utterly forgotten as those whose carcases are left to rot on the battle-field. As when a soldier, mortally wounded, bleeds unheeded amid the heaps of slain, and remains to his last expiring groan unpitied and unsuccoured, so did Heman sigh out his soul in loneliest sorrow, feeling as if even God himself had quite forgotten him. How low the spirits of good and brave men will sometimes sink. Under the influence of certain disorders everything will wear a sombre aspect, and the heart will dive into the profoundest deeps of misery. It is all very well for those who are in robust health and full of spirits to blame those whose lives are sicklied o'er with the pale cast of melancholy, but the evil is as real as a gaping wound, and all the more hard to bear because it lies so much in the region of the soul that to the inexperienced it appears to be a mere matter of fancy and diseased imagination. Reader, never ridicule the nervous and hypochondriacal, their pain is real; though much of the evil lies in the imagination, it is not imaginary. "*And they are cut off from thy hand.*" Poor Heman felt as if God himself had put him away, smitten him and laid him among the corpses of those executed by divine justice. He mourned that the hand of the Lord had gone out against him, and that he was divided from the great Author of his life. This is the essence of wormwood. Man's blows are trifles, but God's smitings are terrible to a gracious heart. To feel utterly forsaken of the Lord and cast away as though hopelessly corrupt is the very climax of heart-desolation.

6. "*Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps.*" What a collection of forcible metaphors, each one expressive of the utmost grief. Heman compared his forlorn condition to an imprisonment in a subterranean dungeon, to confinement in the realms of the dead, and to a plunge into the abyss. None of the similes are strained. The mind can descend far lower than the body, for there are bottomless pits. The flesh can bear only a certain number of wounds and no more, but the soul can bleed in ten thousand ways, and die over and over again each hour. It is grievous to the good man to see the Lord whom he loves laying him in the sepulchre of despondency; piling nightshade upon him, putting out all his candles, and heaping over him solid masses of sorrow; evil from so good a hand seems evil indeed, and yet if faith could but be allowed to speak she would remind the depressed spirit that it is better to fall into the hand of the Lord than into the hands of man, and moreover she would tell the despondent heart that

God never placed a Joseph in a pit without drawing him up again to fill a throne : that he never caused a horror of great darkness to fall upon an Abraham without revealing his covenant to him ; and never cast even a Jonah into the deeps without preparing the means to land him safely on dry land. Alas, when under deep depression the mind forgets all this, and is only conscious of its unutterable misery ; the man sees the lion but not the honey in its carcase, he feels the thorns but he cannot smell the roses which adorn them. He who now feebly expounds these words knows within himself more than he would care or dare to tell of the abysses of inward anguish. He has sailed round the Cape of Storms, and has drifted along by the dreary headlands of despair. He has groaned out with one of old—" My bones are pierced in me in the night season ; and my sinews take no rest. I go mourning without the sun. Terrors are turned upon me, they pursue my soul as the wind." Those who know this bitterness by experience will sympathise, but from others it would be idle to expect pity, nor would their pity be worth the having if it could be obtained. It is an unspeakable consolation that our Lord Jesus knows this experience, right well, having, with the exception of the sin of it, felt it all and more than all in Gethsemane when he was exceeding sorrowful even unto death.

7. "*Thy wrath lieth hard upon me.*" Dreadful plight this, the worst in which a man can be found. Wrath is heavy in itself ; God's wrath is crushing beyond conception, and when that presses hard the soul is oppressed indeed. The wrath of God is the very hell of hell, and when it weighs upon the conscience a man feels a torment such as only that of damned spirits can exceed. Joy or peace, or even numbness of indifference, there can be none to one who is loaded with this most tremendous of burdens. "*And thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves,*" or *all thy breakers.* He pictures God's wrath as breaking over him like those waves of the sea which swell, and rage, and dash with fury upon the shore. How could his frail barque hope to survive those cruel breakers, white like the hungry teeth of death ? Seas of affliction seemed to rush in upon him with all the force of omnipotence ; he felt himself to be oppressed and afflicted like Israel in Egypt, when they cried by reason of their afflictions. It appeared impossible for him to suffer more, he had exhausted the methods of adversity and endured *all* its waves. So have we imagined, and yet it is not really quite so bad. The worst case might be worse, there are alleviations to every woe ; God has other and more terrible waves which, if he chose to let them forth, would sweep us into the infernal abyss, whence hope has long since been banished.

"*Selah.*" There was need to rest. Above the breakers the swimmer lifts his head and looks around him, breathing for a moment, until the next wave comes. Even lamentation must have its pauses. Nights are broken up into watches, and even so mourning has its intervals. Such sorrowful music is a great strain both on voices and instruments, and it is well to give the singers the relief of silence for a while.

8. "*Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me.*" If ever we need friends it is in the dreary hour of despondency and the weary time of bodily sickness ; therefore does the sufferer complain because divine providence had removed his friends. Perhaps his disease was infectious or defiling, so that he was legally separated from his fellow men, perhaps their fears kept them away from his plague-stricken house, or else his good name had become so injured that they naturally avoided him. Most friends require but small excuse for turning their backs on the afflicted. The swallows offer no apology for leaving us to winter by ourselves. Yet it is a piercing pain which arises from the desertion of dear associates ; it is a wound which festers and refuses to be healed. "*Thou hast made me an abomination unto them.*" They turned from him as though he had become loathsome and contaminating, and this because of something which the Lord had done to him ; therefore, he brings his complaint to the prime mover in his trouble. He who is still flattered by the companions of his pleasure can little guess the wretchedness which will be his portion should he become poor, or slanderously accused, for then one by one the parasites of his prosperity will go their way and leave him to his fate, not without cutting remarks on their part to increase his misery. Men have not so much power to bless by friendship as to curse by treachery. Earth's poisons are more deadly than her medicines are healing. The mass of men who gather around a man and flatter him are like tame leopards ; when they lick his hand it is well for him to remember that with equal gusto they would drink his blood. "Cursed is he that trusteth in man." "*I am shut up, and I cannot come forth.*" He was a

prisoner in his room, and felt like a leper in the lazaretto, or a condemned criminal in his cell. His mind, too, was bound as with fetters of iron; he felt no liberty of hope, he could take no flights of joy. When God shuts friends out, and shuts us in to pine away alone, it is no wonder if we water our couch with tears.

9. "*Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction.*" He wept his eyes out. He exhausted the lachrymal glands, he wore away the sight itself. Tears in showers are a blessing, and work our good; but in floods they become destructive and injurious. "*Lord, I have called daily upon thee.*" His tears wetted his prayers, but did not damp their fervour. He prayed still, though no answer came to dry his eyes. Nothing can make a true believer cease praying; it is a part of his nature, and pray he must. "*I have stretched out my hands unto thee.*" He used the appropriate posture of a supplicant, of his own accord; men need no posture-maker, or master of the ceremonies, when they are eagerly pleading for mercy, nature suggests to them attitudes both natural and correct. As a little child stretches out its hands to its mother while it cries, so did this afflicted child of God. He prayed all over, his eyes wept, his voice cried, his hands were outstretched, and his heart broke. This was prayer indeed.

10. "*Will thou shew wonders to the dead?*" Wherefore then suffer me to die? While I live thou canst in me display the glories of thy grace, but when I have passed into the unknown land, how canst thou illustrate in me thy love? If I perish thou wilt lose a worshipper who both revered, and in his own experience illustrated, the wonders of thy character and acts. This is good pleading, and therefore he repeats it. "*Shall the dead arise and praise thee?*" He is thinking only of the present, and not of the last great day, and he urges that the Lord would have one the less to praise him among the sons of men. Shades take no part in the quires of the Sabbath, ghosts sing no joyous psalms, sepulchres and vaults send forth no notes of thanksgiving. True the souls of departed saints render glory to God, but the dejected Psalmist's thoughts do not mount to heaven but survey the gloomy grave: he stays on this side of eternity, where in the grave he sees no wonders and hears no songs.

"*Selah.*" At the mouth of the tomb he sits down to meditate, and then returns to his theme.

11. "*Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave?*" Thy tender goodness—who shall testify concerning it in that cold abode where the worm and corruption hold their riot? The living may indite "*Meditations among the Tombs,*" but the dead know nothing, and therefore can declare nothing. "*Or thy faithfulness in destruction?*" If the Lord suffered his servant to die before the divine promise was fulfilled, it would be quite impossible for his faithfulness to be proclaimed. The poet is dealing with this life only, and looking at the matter from the point of view afforded by time and the present race of men; if a believer were deserted and permitted to die in despair, there could come no voice from his grave to inform mankind that the Lord had rectified his wrongs and relieved him of his trials, no songs would leap up from the cold sod to hymn the truth and goodness of the Lord; but as far as men are concerned, a voice which loved to magnify the grace of God would be silenced, and a loving witness for the Lord removed from the sphere of testimony.

12. "*Shall thy wonders be known in the dark?*" If not here permitted to prove the goodness of Jehovah, how could the singer do so in the land of darkness and deathshade? Could his tongue, when turned into a clod, charm the dull cold ear of death? Is not a living dog better than a dead lion, and a living believer of more value to the cause of God on earth than all the departed put together? "*And thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?*" What shall be told concerning thee in the regions of oblivion? Where memory and love are lost, and men are alike unknowing and unknown, forgetful and forgotten, what witness to the divine holiness can be borne? The whole argument amounts to this—if the believer dies unblest, how will God's honour be preserved? Who will bear witness to his truth and righteousness?

13. "*But unto thee have I cried, O Lord;*" I have continued to pray for help to thee, O Jehovah, the living God, even though thou hast so long delayed to answer. A true-born child of God may be known by his continuing to cry; a hypocrite is great at a spurt, but the genuine believer holds on till he wins his suit. "*And in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee.*" He meant to plead on yet, and to increase his earnestness. He intended to be up betimes, to anticipate the daylight, and

begin to pray before the sun was up. If the Lord is pleased to delay, he has a right to do as he wills, but we must not therefore become tardy in supplication. If we count the Lord slack concerning his promise we must only be the more eager to outrun him, lest sinful sloth on our path should hinder the blessing.

“ Let prayer and holy hymn
 Perfume the morning air ;
 Before the world with smoke is dim
 Bestir thy soul to prayer.
 While flowers are wet with dew
 Lament thy sins with tears,
 And ere the sun shines forth anew
 Tell to thy Lord thy fears.”

14. “ *Lord, why casteth thou off my soul?* ” Hast thou not aforetime chosen me, wilt thou now reject me? Shall thine elect ones become thy reprobates? Dost thou, like changeable men, give a writing of divorce to those whom thy love has espoused. Can thy beloveds become thy cast-offs? “ *Why hidest thou thy face from me?* ” Wilt thou not so much as look upon me? Canst thou not afford me a solitary smile? Why this severity to one who has in brighter days basked in the light of thy favour? We may put these questions to the Lord, nay, we ought to do so. It is not undue familiarity, but holy boldness. It may help us to remove the evil which provokes the Lord to jealousy, if we seriously beg him to shew us wherefore he contends with us. He cannot act towards us in other than a right and gracious manner, therefore for every stroke of his rod there is a sufficient reason in the judgment of his loving heart; let us try to learn that reason and profit by it.

15. “ *I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up.* ” His affliction had now lasted so long that he could hardly remember when it commenced; it seemed to him as if he had been at death’s door ever since he was a child. This was no doubt an exaggeration of a depressed spirit, and yet perhaps Heman may have been born under the cypress, and have been all his days afflicted with some chronic disease or bodily infirmity; there are holy men and women whose lives are a long apprenticeship to patience, and these deserve both our sympathy and our reverence,—our reverence we have ventured to say, for since the Saviour became the acquaintance of grief, sorrow has become honourable in believers’ eyes. A life-long sickness may by divine grace prove to be a life-long blessing. Better suffer from childhood to old age than be let alone to find pleasure in sin.

“ *While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted.* ” Long use had not blunted the edge of sorrow, God’s terrors had not lost their terror; rather had they become more overwhelming and had driven the man to despair. He was unable to collect his thoughts, he was so tossed about that he could not judge and weigh his own condition in a calm and rational manner. Sickness alone will thus distract the mind; and when a sense of divine anger is added thereto, it is not to be wondered at if reason finds it hard to hold the reins. How near akin to madness soul-depression sometimes may be, it is not our province to decide; but we speak what we do know when we say that a feather-weight might be sufficient to turn the scale at times. Thank God, O ye tempted ones who yet retain your reason! Thank him that the devil himself cannot add that feather while the Lord stands by to adjust all things. Even though we have grazed upon the rock of utter distraction, we bless the infinitely gracious Steersman that the vessel is seaworthy yet, and answers to her helm: tempest-tossed from the hour of her launch even to this hour, yet she mounts the waves and defies the hurricane.

16. “ *Thy fierce wrath goeth over me.* ” What an expression, “ *fierce wrath,* ” and it is a man of God who feels it! Do we seek an explanation? It seemed so to him, but “ *things are not what they seem.* ” No punitive anger ever falls upon the saved one, for Jesus shields him from it all; but a father’s anger may fall upon his dearest child, none the less but all the more, because he loves it. Since Jesus bore my guilt as my substitute, my Judge cannot punish me, but my Father can and will correct me. In this sense the Father may even manifest “ *fierce wrath* ” to his erring child, and under a sense of it that dear broken-down one may be laid in the dust and covered with wretchedness, and yet for all that he may be accepted and beloved of the Lord all the while. Heman represents God’s wrath as breaking over him as waves over a wreck. “ *Thy terrors have cut me off.* ” They have made me a marked man, they have made me feel like a leper separated from the congre-

gation of thy people, and they have caused others to look upon me as no better than dead. Blessed be God this is the sufferer's idea and not the very truth, for the Lord will neither cast off nor cut off his people, but will visit his mourners with choice refreshments.

17. "*They came round about me daily like water.*" My troubles, and thy chastisements poured in upon me, penetrating everywhere, and drowning all. Such is the permeating and pervading power of spiritual distress, there is no shutting it out; it soaks into the soul like the dew into Gideon's fleece; it sucks the spirit down as the quicksand swallows the ship; it overwhelms it as the deluge submerged the green earth. "*They compassed me about together.*" Grievings hemmed him in. He was like the deer in the hunt, when the dogs are all around and at his throat. Poor soul! and yet he was a man greatly beloved of heaven!

18. "*Lover and friend hast thou put far from me.*" Even when they are near me bodily, they are so unable to swim with me in such deep waters, that they stand like men far away on the shore while I am buffeted with the billows; but, alas, they shun me, the dearest lover of all is afraid of such a distracted one, and those who took counsel with me avoid me now! The Lord Jesus knew the meaning of this in all its wormwood and gall when in his passion. In dreadful loneliness he trod the wine-press, and all his garments were distained with the red blood of those sour grapes. Lonely sorrow falls to the lot of not a few; let them not repine, but enter herein into close communion with that dearest lover and friend who is never far from his tried ones. "*And mine acquaintance into darkness,*" or better still, *my acquaintance is darkness.* I am familiar only with sadness, all else has vanished. I am a child crying alone in the dark. Will the heavenly Father leave his child there? Here he breaks off, and anything more from us would only spoil the abruptness of the unexpected FINIS.

[We have not attempted to interpret this Psalm concerning our Lord, but we fully believe that where the members are, the Head is to be seen pre-eminently. To have given a double exposition under each verse would have been difficult and confusing; we have therefore left the Messianic references to be pointed out in the Notes, where, if God the Holy Ghost be pleased to illustrate the page, we have gathered up more than enough to lead each devout reader to behold Jesus, the man of sorrows and the acquaintance of grief.]

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS.

Title.—"Mahalath Leannoth." I lean to the idea, that the words *Mahalath Leannoth* are intended to denote some musical instrument of the plaintive order, and in this opinion KIMCHI and other Jewish writers perfectly agree. They assert that it was a wind-instrument, answering very much to the flute, and employed mainly in giving utterance to sentiments of grief, upon occasions of great sorrow and lamentation. With this view of the title, I should look for no new translation, but should just read it substantially as our translators here: "A Song or Psalm for the sons of Korah, to the giver of victory, upon Mahalath Leannoth, an instruction for Heman, the Ezrahite.—John Morison.

Title.—"Leannoth" is variously rendered, according as it is derived from נָאָה, *anah*, to suffer, be afflicted, or from נָאָה, *anah*, to chant, sing. Gesenius, De Wette, Dr. Davies, and others take the latter view; while Mudge, Hengstenberg, Alexander, and others take the former. Mudge translates, to create dejection; Alexander renders, *mahalath leannoth, concerning afflictive sickness*; Hengstenberg reads, upon the distress of oppression. The Septuagint (ἀποκριθῆναι) and the Vulgate (*respondendum*) indicate a responsive song, and Houbigant translates the words in question, for the choirs, that they may answer. Many etymologists consider the primary idea of נָאָה, *anah*, to sing, that of answering. The tone of the psalm in question, however, being decidedly that of sadness and dejection, it appears more probable that *leannoth* denotes the strictly elegiac character of the performance, and the whole title may read therefore, "A Song or Psalm, for the sons of Korah, to the chief musician, upon the flutes [or the hollow instruments], to afflict [or cause dejection], a didactic Psalm of Heman, the Ezrahite."—F. G. Hibbard, in "The Psalms chronologically arranged, with Historical Introductions." New York, 1856.

Title.—The explanation:—to be performed mournfully with subdued voice,

agrees with the mournful contents, whose tone is even more gloomy than that of Ps. lxxvii.—From “*The Psalms, By C. B. Moll.*” [*Lange's Series of Commentaries.*]

Title.—“*Heman.*” 1. David was not the only man acquainted with sad exercise and affliction of spirit, for here is another, to wit, *Heman the Ezrahite*, as deep in trouble of spirit as he or any other beside. 2. They are not all men of weak minds and shallow wits who are acquainted with trouble of spirit, and borne down with the sense of God’s wrath; for here is *Heman*, one amongst the wisest of all Israel (and inferior to none for wisdom, except to Solomon alone), under the heaviest exercise we can imagine possible for a saint. 3. When it pleaseth God to exercise a man of parts, of great gifts and graces, he can make his burden proportionable to his strength, and give him as much to do with the difficulties he puts him to, as a weaker man shall find in his exercise, as appeareth in the experience of *Heman*. 4. Wise men in their trouble must take the same course with the simpler sort of men; that is, they must run to God as others do, and seek relief only in his grace, who as he distributeth the measures of trouble, can also give comfort, ease, and deliverance from them, as the practice of *Heman* doth teach us. 5. What trouble of wounded spirit some of God’s children have felt in former times, others dear to God may find the like in after ages, and all men ought to prepare for the like, and should not think the exercise strange when it cometh, but must comfort themselves in this, that other saints whose names are recorded in Scripture, have been under like affliction; for the Psalm is appointed “to give instruction”; it is “*Maschil of Heman.*” 6. What is at one time matter of mourning to one of God’s children, may become matter of joy and singing afterward, both to himself and to others, as this sad anguish of spirit in *Heman* is made a song of joy unto God’s glory, and the comfort of all afflicted souls, labouring under the sense of sin and felt wrath of God, unto the world’s end; it is “*A Song, a Psalm for the sons of Korah.*” 7. Such as are most heartily afflicted in spirit, and do flee to God for reconciliation and consolation through Christ, have no reason to suspect themselves, that they are not esteemed of and loved as dear children, because they feel so much of God’s wrath: for here is a saint who hath drunken of that cup (as deep as any who shall read this Psalm), here is one so much loved and honoured of God, as to be a penman of Holy Scripture, and a pattern of faith and patience unto others; even *Heman the Ezrahite.*—*David Dickson.*

Whole Psalm.—“We have in this Psalm the voice of our suffering Redeemer,” says Horne; and the contents may be thus briefly stated—

1. *The plaintive wailing of the suffering one*, verses 1, 2. It strongly resembles Ps. xxii. 1, 2.

2. *His soul exceeding sorrowful, even unto death*, verses 3, 4, 5. The word “*free*” in our version, is פָּרַד, properly denoting separation from others, and here rendered by Junius and Tremellius, “set aside from intercourse and communication with men, having nothing in common with them, like those who are afflicted with leprosy, and are sent away to separate dwellings.” They quote 2 Chron. xxvi. 21.

3. *His feelings of hell*, verses 6, 7. For he feels God’s prison, and the gloom of God’s darkest wrath. And “*Selah*” gives time to ponder.

4. *His feelings of shame and helplessness*, verse 8. “His own receive him not.”

5. *The effects of soul-agony upon his body*, verse 9.

6. *His submission to the Lord*, verse 9. It is the very tone of Gethsemane, “Nevertheless, not my will!”

7. *The sustaining hope of resurrection*, verses 10 (with a solemn pause, “*Selah*”), 11, 12. The “*land of forgetfulness*,” and “*the dark*,” express the unseen world, which, to those on this side of the veil, is so unknown, and where those who enter it are to us as if they had for ever been forgotten by those they left behind. God’s wonders shall be made known there. There shall be victory gained over death and the grave: God’s “*lovingkindness*” to man, and his “*faithfulness*,” pledge him to do this new thing in the universe. Messiah must return from the abodes of the invisible state; and in due time, *Heman*, as well as all other members of the Messiah’s body, must return also. Yes, God’s wonders shall be known at the grave’s mouth. God’s *righteousness*, in giving what satisfied justice in behalf of Messiah’s members, has been manifested gloriously, so that resurrection must follow, and the land of forgetfulness must give up its dead. O morning of surpassing bliss, hasten on! Messiah has risen; when shall all that are his arise? Till that day dawn, they must take up their Head’s plaintive expostulations, and remind their

God in Heman's strains of what he has yet to accomplish. "Will thou shew wonders to the dead?" etc.

8. *His perseverance in vehement prayer*, verses 13, 14.

9. *His long-continued and manifold woes*, verses 15, 16, 17.

10. *His loneliness of soul*, verse 18. Hengstenberg renders the last clause of this verse more literally—"The dark kingdom of the dead is instead of all my companions." What unutterable gloom! completed by this last dark shade—all sympathy from every quarter totally withdrawn! Forlorn indeed! Sinking from gloom to gloom, from one deep to another, and every billow sweeping over him, and wrath, like a tremendous mountain, "leaning" or resting its weight on the crushed worm. Not even Psalm xxii. is more awfully solemnising, there being in this deeply melancholy Psalm only one cheering glimpse through the intense gloom, namely, that of resurrection hoped for, but still at a distance. At such a price was salvation purchased by him who is the resurrection and the life. He himself wrestled for life and resurrection in our name—and that price so paid is the reason why to us salvation is free. And so we hear in solemn joy the harp of Judah struck by Heman, to overawe our souls not with his own sorrows, but with what Horsley calls "The lamentation of Messiah," or yet more fully, *The sorrowful days and nights of the Man of Sorrows*.—Andrew A. Bonar.

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm stands alone in all the Psalter for the unrelieved gloom, the hopeless sorrow of its tone. Even the very saddest of the others, and the Lamentations themselves, admit some variations of key, some strains of hopefulness; here only all is darkness to the close.—Neale and Littledale.

Whole Psalm.—The prophecy in the foregoing Psalm of the conversion of all nations is followed by this Passion-Psalm, in order that it may never be forgotten that God has purchased to himself an universal church, by the precious blood of his dear Son.—Christopher Wordsworth.

Whole Psalm.—All the misery and sorrow which are described in this Psalm, says Brentius, have been the lot of Christ's people. We may therefore take the Psalm, he adds, to be common to Christ and his church.—W. Wilson.

Verse 1.—"My." That little word "my" opens for a moment a space between the clouds through which the Sun of righteousness casts one solitary beam. Generally speaking, you will find that when the Psalm begins with lamentation, it ends with praise; like the sun, which, rising in clouds and mist, sets brightly, and darts forth its parting rays just before it goes down. But here the first gleam shoots across the sky just as the sun rises, and no sooner has the ray appeared, than thick clouds and darkness gather over it; the sun continues its course throughout the whole day enveloped in clouds; and sets at last in a thicker bank of them than it ever had around it during the day. "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness." In what a dark cloud does the sun of Heman set!—J. C. Philpot.

Verse 1.—"Before thee." He had not recklessly poured forth his complaints, or cast them to the winds, as many are wont to do, who have no hope in their calamities; but he had always mingled with his complaining prayers for obtaining deliverance, and had directed them to God, where faith assured him his prayers would be seen again. This must be attentively noted, since herein is seen of what kind the complaints of the saints are.—Mollerus.

Verse 1.—"Before thee." Other men seek some hiding place where they may murmur against God, but the Psalmist comes into the Lord's presence and states his grievances. When a man dares to pour out his complaint before the Lord's own face, his woes are real, and not the result of petulance or a rebellious spirit.—C. H. S.

Verses 1, 2.—"Before thee." Not seeking to be seen by human eye, but by God alone, therefore, "let my prayer come before thee," that is, let it be acceptable before thee, after the similitude of ambassadors who are admitted to audience; and when my prayer has entered "incline thine ear unto my cry," because thou hearest the desire of the afflicted.—Richardus Hampolus.

Verse 2.—"Incline thine ear," etc. It is necessary that God should incline his ear unto our prayer, else it would be in vain to come before Him. The prodigal did not venture to present his prayer before the father ran and fell upon his neck and kissed him. For then he said, Luke xv. 21, "Father, I have sinned against

heaven, and in thy sight," etc., and so he obtained mercy. Esther did not present her prayer to Ahasuerus before he descended from his throne and inclined himself to her. Esth. v. 2, etc.—*Le Blanc*.

Verse 3.—"My soul is full of troubles." The Lord Jesus emptied himself of glory, that he might be full of trouble. His soul, which was free from human sin, was full of human troubles, that we who are full of sin might be free from trouble; his life drew nigh to the terrors of the unseen world, that we might not be its spoil and prey.—"Plain Commentary."

Verse 3.—"My soul is full of troubles." Hear into what a depth of spiritual distress three worthy servants of God in these later times were plunged and pressed down under the sense of God's anger for sin. Blessed *Mistress Bretergh* upon her last bed was horribly hemmed in with the sorrows of death; the very grief of hell laid hold upon her soul; a roaring wilderness of woe was within her, as she confessed of herself. She said, her sin had made her a prey to Satan; and wished that she had never been born, or that she had been made any other creature rather than a woman. She cried out many times, woe, woe, woe, etc.; a weak, a woful, a wretched, a forsaken woman; with tears continually trickling from her eyes. *Master Peacock*, that man of God, in that his dreadful visitation and desertion, recounting some smaller sins, burst out in these words: "And for these," saith he, "I feel now a hell in my conscience." Upon other occasions he cried out, groaning most pitifully, "Oh me, wretch! Oh mine heart is miserable! Oh, oh, miserable and woful! The burden of my sin lieth so heavy upon me, I doubt it will break my heart. Oh how woful and miserable is my state that I am hunted by hell-hounds!" When by-standers asked if he would pray, he answered, "I cannot." Suffer us, say they, to pray for you. "Take not," replied he, "the name of God in vain, by praying for a reprobate."

What grievous pangs, what sorrowful torments, what boiling heats of the fire of hell that blessed saint of God, *John Glover*, felt inwardly in his spirit, saith Foxe, no speech outwardly is able to express. Being young, saith he, I remember I was once or twice with him, whom partly by his talk I perceived, and partly by mine own eyes saw to be so worn and consumed by the space of five years, that neither almost any brooking of meat, quietness of sleep, pleasure of life, yea, and almost no kind of senses was left in him. Upon apprehension of some backsliding, he was so perplexed, that if he had been in the deepest pit of hell, he could almost have despaired no more of his salvation; in which intolerable griefs of mind, saith he, although he neither had, nor could have any joy of his meat, yet was he compelled to eat against his appetite, to the end to defer the time of his damnation so long as he might; thinking with himself, but that he must needs be thrown into hell, the breath being once out of his body. I dare not pass out of this point, lest some child of God should be here discouraged, before I tell you that every one of these three was at length blessedly recovered, and did rise most gloriously out of their several depths of extremest spiritual misery, before their end.

Hear, therefore, *Mistress Bretergh's* triumphant songs and ravishments of spirit, after the return of her well-beloved: "O Lord Jesu, dost thou pray for me? O blessed and sweet Saviour, how wonderful! How wonderful are thy mercies! Oh thy love is unspeakable, thou hast dealt so graciously with me! O my Lord and my God, blessed be thy name for evermore, which hast shewed me the path of life. Thou didst, O Lord, hide thy face from me for a little season, but with everlasting mercy thou hast had compassion on me. And now, blessed Lord, thy comfortable presence is come; yea, Lord, thou hast had respect unto thine handmaid, and art come with fulness of joy, and abundance of consolation. O blessed be thy name, my Lord and my God. O the joys that I feel in my soul! They be wonderful. O Father, how merciful and marvellously gracious art thou unto me! yea, Lord, I feel thy mercy and I am assured of thy love; and so certain am I thereof, as Thou art the God of truth, even so sure do I know myself to be thine, O Lord my God, and this my soul knoweth right well. Blessed be the Lord that hath thus comforted me, and hath brought me now to a place more sweet unto me than the garden of Eden. Oh the joy, the delightful joy that I feel! O praise the Lord for his mercies, and for this joy which my soul feeleth full well; praise his name for evermore.

Hear with what heavenly calmness and sweet comforts *Master Peacock's* heart was refreshed and ravished when the storm was over: "Truly, my heart and soul,"

saith he, (when the tempest was something allayed) "have been far led and deeply troubled with temptations, and stings of conscience, but I thank God they are eased in good measure. Wherefore I desire that I be not branded with the note of a cast-away or reprobate. Such questions, oppositions, and all tending thereto, I renounce. Concerning mine inconsiderate speeches in my temptation, I humbly and heartily ask mercy of God for them all." Afterward by little, and little, more light did arise in his heart, and he brake out into such speeches as these: "I do, God be praised, feel such comfort from that, what shall I call it?" "Agony," said one that stood by. "Nay," quoth he, "that is too little; that had I five hundred worlds, I could not make satisfaction for such an issue. Oh, the sea is not more full of water, nor the sun of light, than the Lord of mercy; yea, his mercies are ten thousand times more. What great cause have I to magnify the great goodness of God, that hath humbled such a wretched miscreant, and of so base condition, to an estate so glorious and stately. The Lord hath honoured me with his goodness I am sure he hath provided a glorious kingdom for me. The joy that I feel in mine heart is incredible." For the third, (namely, *John Glover*) hear Mr. Foxe: "Though this good servant of God suffered many years so sharp temptations, and strong buffetings of Satan; yet the Lord, who graciously preserved him all the while, not only at last did rid him out of all discomfort, but also framed him thereby to such mortification of life, as the like lightly hath not been seen; in such sort, as he being like one placed in heaven already, and dead in this world both in word and meditation, led a life altogether celestial, abhorring in his mind all profane doings—*Robert Bolton* (1572—1631), in "*Instructions for a right Comforting afflicted Consciences.*"

Verse 3.—"My life." The Hebrew word rendered *life* is in the plural number, as in Gen. ii. 7; iii. 14, 17; vi. 17; vii. 15; *et al.* Why the plural was used as applicable to life cannot now be known with certainty. It may have been to accord with the fact, that man has *two* kinds of life;—the animal life,—or life in common with the inferior creation; and intellectual, or higher life,—the life of the *soul*. The meaning here is, that he was about to die; or that his *life* or *lives* approached that state when the grave closes over us; the extinction of the mere animal life; and the separation of the soul—the immortal part—from the body.—*Albert Barnes.*

3. "*The grave.*" The word which is rendered "*hell*" in the Prayer Book translation, and "*the grave*" in the Bible version, and which is usually translated either as *hell* or *the grave*, is in the Hebrew *שְׁאוֹל* and in the Greek "*Hades.*" "*Hades*" signifies "the unseen world." The word "*Sheol*" is literally "the Devouring, or the Insatiable." (Compare Hab. ii. 5, "who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied;" and also Prov. xxx. 15, 16.) "*Sheol*" seems to have presented itself to the thoughts of the ancient Hebrews as a gloomy, silent, inevitable, and mysterious abode, situated within the earth, whither the souls of the departed were compelled to repair and to dwell, upon their being separated from the body. (Isa. xiv. 9—20). They believed that the spirits of all human kind were contained there in a state of waiting, and there especially dwelt the souls of the giants before the flood (1 Pet. iii. 19, 20), and of the great ones of old, the *Rephaim*, whom they pictured to themselves as fearful and gigantic spectres (Compare Prov. ii. 18). These ideas became modified and developed with the increasing clearness of divine teaching; and they divided the abode of the dead into different states of hope and comfort, which they called Abraham's bosom and paradise (Luke xvi. 22, 23; xxiii. 43); and of misery and suffering (Wisdom iii. 1). Life and immortality were brought to light by the Saviour, and also judgment and Hell—the *Gehenna* of everlasting punishment, as distinguished from the Unseen World. (Compare Rev. xx. 13, 14.) From these speculations of Jewish Rabbis respecting *Sheol* the church of Rome appears to have developed the doctrine of Purgatory. It should be added that it was a received opinion among the followers of Rabbinical teaching, that all of the seed of Abraham, though they would be dwellers in *Sheol* before the general resurrection, would finally escape the *Gehenna* of everlasting fire. The rich man (Luke xvi. 23) is in Hades in torments when he calls to Abraham his father.—"*Plain Commentary.*"

Verse 4.—"I am counted with them that go down into the pit." Not only myself, says he, but others also now despair of my life, and number me with those whose corpses are borne forth to burial. For now all my powers have failed and my vital

spirits become quenched. He uses the word נָצַח which indicates fortitude rather than עָזַב or פָּחַד in order to show how great the severity of these evils was, and the vehemence of his griefs, which had broken even a most robust man.—*Mollerus*.

Verse 4.—“*I am counted with them that go down into the pit.*” Next to the troubles of Christ’s soul, are mentioned the disgrace and ignominy to which he submitted: He who was the fountain of immortality, from whom no one could take his life, who could in a moment have commanded twelve legions of angels to his aid, or have caused heaven and earth, at a word speaking, to fly away before him, he was counted among them that go down into the pit; he died, to all appearance, like the rest of mankind; nay, he was forcibly put to death, as a malefactor; and seemed, in the hands of his executioners, as a man that had no strength, no power, or might, to help and save himself. His strength went from him; he became weak, and like another man. The people shook their heads at him, saying, “He saved others, himself he cannot save.”—*Samuel Burder*.

Verse 4.—There is in the original an antithesis, which cannot be conveyed by mere translation, arising from the fact that the first word for *man* is one implying strength.—*J. A. Alexander*.

Verse 5.—“*Free among the dead.*” In the former verse he had said that he had approached very near to death, now he is plainly dead: there he was about to be buried, here he is laid in the sepulchre: thus had his sufferings increased. *Free* is to be understood of the affairs of this life, as when it is said, Job iii. 19, “And the servant is free from his master.”—*Martin Bucer*, 1491—1551.

Verse 5.—“*Free among the dead.*” $\text{בַּמֵּתִים חֹפְשִׁי}$ *bammethim chopshi*, I rather think, means *stripped among the dead*. Both the fourth and fifth verses seem to allude to a *field of battle*: the *slain* and the *wounded* are found scattered over the plain; the *spoilers* come among them, and strip, not only the *dead*, but those also who appear to be *mortally wounded* and cannot recover, and are so feeble as not to be able to resist. Hence the Psalmist says, “*I am as a man that hath no strength,*” verse 4.—*Adam Clarke*.

Verse 5.—“*Free.*” There is no immunity so long as we are in the flesh, there is no truce, but constant unrest distracts us. Liberty, therefore, is given to us after death, because we rest from our labours.—*Franciscus Vatablus*.

Verse 5.—“*Cut off from thy hand.*” Beware how you ever look upon yourself as *cut off* from life and from enjoyment; you are not cut off, only taken apart, laid aside, it may be but for a season, or it may be for life; but still you are part of the body of which Christ is the Head. Some must suffer and some must serve, but each one is necessary to the other, “the whole body is fitly framed together by that which every joint supplieth,” “the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you:” Eph. iv. 16; 1 Cor. xii. 21. Your feet may be set fast; they may have run with great activity, and you sorrow now, because they can run no more. But do not sorrow thus, do not envy those who are running; you have a work to do; it may be the work of the head, or of the eye, it surely is whatever work God gives to you. It may be the work of lying still, of not stirring hand or foot, of scarcely speaking, scarcely showing life. Fear not: if He your heavenly Master has given it to you to do, it is *His* work, and He will bless it. Do not repine. Do not say, *This* is work, and, *this* is *not*; how do you know? What work, think you, was Daniel doing in the lions’ den? or Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace? Their work was “glorious, laudable, and honourable,” they were glorifying God in suffering.—*From “Sickness, its Trials and Blessings.”* [Anon.] 1868.

Verse 6.—“*Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit,*” etc. He expands his meaning by another similitude. For he compares himself to a captive who has been cast into a deep, foul, dark, and slimy pit, where he is shut up and plunged in filth and darkness, having not a remnant of hope and life; after the manner of Jeremiah’s sufferings, chap. xxxvii. By this simile he means that he was in the greatest anxieties and sorrows of mind, destitute of every hope and sense of consolation, and that the terrors of death continually increased and augmented.—*Mollerus*.

Verse 6.—When a saint is under terrible impressions of Jehovah’s infinite wrath, he cannot but be under great horror of conscience, and in perplexing depths of mental trouble. The sense which he hath of avenging wrath, occasions a conflict

in his spirit, inexpressibly agonizing and terrible. When his troubled conscience is inflamed, by a sense of the fiery indignation of God almighty, the more he thinks of him as his infinite enemy, the more he is dismayed: every thought of *him*, brings doleful tidings, and pours oil upon the raging flame. Trouble of conscience for sin, is indeed very disquieting; but, a sense of the vindictive wrath of God, kindled in the conscience, is still more dreadful. No words can express the direful anguish, which the disconsolate soul then feels. The Christian cannot at that time think so much as one quieting, one cheering thought. What he first thinks of is tormenting to his wounded spirit: he changes that thought for another, and that is still more tormenting. He finds himself entangled, as in the midst of a thicket of thorns; so that, which way soever he turns himself, he is pierced and grieved afresh. This dismal thought often arises in his troubled mind,—That if death were, in his present condition, to surprise and cut him off, he should sink for ever and ever, under the intolerable wrath of the infinite Jehovah. The most exquisite torment of body is almost nothing, in comparison of the anguish of his spirit at such times. Oh! how inconceivable is the anguish, the agony, especially of a holy soul, when it is conflicting with the tremendous wrath of the eternal God! The bodily torture even of crucifixion, could not extort from the holy Jesus the smallest sigh or complaint; but the sense of his Father's wrath in his soul, wrung from him that doleful outcry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!"—*John Colquhoun*, in "*A Treatise on Spiritual Comfort*," 1814.

Verse 7.—"Thy wrath lieth hard upon me." Others read, *sustains itself*, or *bears up itself upon me*, which is as if a giant should with his whole weight stay himself upon a child.—*Thomas Goodwin*.

Verse 7.—There are some that feel the wrath of God on their souls and consciences, and yet are not under wrath, but are true saints of God. Examples ye have in Paul, that chosen vessel of God to bear the name of Jesus among the Gentiles, he had fightings without and terrors within. Heman the Ezrahite said, 'The waves of the Lord's indignation are gone over my head, so that they are like to drown me; I suffer terrors and doubtings from my very youth, so that I can never be quit of them.' And both these were the dear children of God. Now, if thou feelest nothing but wrath, and thou dost ask how thou shalt judge of thy state when thou art bearing such a wrath, that put all the sand of the sea in balance with it, it would outweigh it; and when thou hast such a fire in thy conscience, that, put iron and brass in that fire, it would melt them, for they were not able to abide it: how then shalt thou know, in this case, that thou art loved of God, and that he hath chosen thee to eternal life? I tell thee, if thou art the chosen child of God, and a vessel of mercy, under a sense of wrath, in this estate this will be thy disposition. First, Thou wilt hate and detest thy sin, which is the cause of thy misery, and hath brought thee to this pain. Secondly, Thou wilt have some dolour and sorrow for thy sin, and thou wilt lament because thou hast provoked God to anger against thee. Thirdly, Thou wilt have a desire to be reconciled to God; and thou wouldst gladly be at peace with him, that thy sins may be taken away out of his sight. Fourthly, There will be hunger and thirst for the blood of Christ to quench that wrath, and for his righteousness to cover thy soul. Fifthly, There will be a patient waiting upon the Lord's deliverance, and when thou canst not get to this persuasion, then there will be a hope above hope, and thou wilt say with Job, xiii. 15, 'Lord, I will trust in thee, though thou shouldst slay me.'—*John Welch*.

Verse 8.—There are times when an unspeakable sadness steals upon me, an immense loneliness takes possession of my soul, a longing perchance for some vanished hand and voice to comfort me as of old, a desolation without form and void, that wraps me in its folds, and darkens my inmost being. It was not thus in the first days of my illness. Then all was so new and strange, that a strange spiritual strength filled my soul, and seemed to bear me up as with angel hands. The love and kindness that my sickness called forth, came to me with a sweet surprise; tender solicitude made my very pain into an occasion of joy to me; and hope was strong and recovery was near, only a few brief weeks between me and returning health, with nothing of sickness remaining, but the memory of all that love and sympathy, like a line of light my Saviour's feet had left, as he walked with me on the troubled sea.

But now that hope is deferred, and returning health seems to loiter by the way,

and recovery is delayed, and the trial lengthens out like an ever-lengthening chain, my soul begins to faint and tire, and the burthen to grow heavier. Even to those who love me most, my pain and helplessness is now an accustomed thing, while to me it keeps its keen edge of suffering, but little dulled by use. My ills to them are a tedious oft-told tale which comes with something of a dull reiteration. It has become almost a matter of course that in the pleasant plan I should be left out, that in the pleasant walk I should be left behind; a matter of course that the pleasures of life should pass me by with folded hand and averted face; and sickness, and monotonous days, and grey shadows should be my portion. . . .

And O my God, my spirit sometimes faints beneath a nameless dread that this loneliness will grow deeper and deeper, if it be thy will that my sickness should continue, or recovery be long delayed. I can no longer be the companion of those I love; shall I be as dear to them as if I could have kept by their side, and been bound up with all their active interests and pleasures? I have to see others take my place, and do my work for them; shall I not suffer loss in their eyes, and others enter into the heritage of love which might have been mine? Will they not grow weary of me, weary of the same old ills, oft repeated, but ever new, and turn with an unconscious feeling of relief, to brighter hearts, and more joyous lives?

My God, my God, to whom can I turn for comfort but unto thee, thou who didst drink the bitter cup of human loneliness to the dregs that thou mightest make thyself a brother to the lonely, a merciful and faithful High Priest to the desolate soul; thou who alone canst pass within, the doors being shut to all human aid, into that secret place of thunder, where the tempest-tossed soul suffers and struggles alone; thou who alone canst command the winds and tempests, and say unto the sea, "Be still!" and unto the wind, "Blow not!" and there shall be a great calm.

As a child alone in the dark, my heart cries out for thee, cries for thine embracing arms, for thy voice of comfort, for thy pierced heart on which to rest my aching head, and feel that Love is near.—From "*Christ the Consoler. A Book of Comfort for the Sick.*" [Anon.] 1872.

Verse 8.—"*Thou hast put away mine acquaintance.*" This tempest of afflictions is all the heavier, because, First, all my acquaintance departed far from me, like swallows in winter time: Prov. xiv. 20. *The poor is hated even of his own neighbour, but the rich hath many friends.* Seneca wisely admonishes: *Flies follow honey, wolves corpses, ants food, the mob follows the pay, not the man.* Job said, Chap. xix. 13, He hath put my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me. My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me. Secondly, Not only do they often depart from the afflicted, but they themselves add to his trouble, and precipitate his falling fortune. A rich man beginning to fall is held up by his friends; but a poor man being down, is thrust away by those who once pretended to love him.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 8.—"*Thou hast made me an abomination unto them:*" lit, "abominations," as if I were one great mass of abominations. (Gen. xlv. 34; xliii. 32.) As Israel was an abomination to the Egyptians, so Messiah, the antitypical Israel, was to the world.—*A. R. Faussel.*

Verse 8.—"*An abomination.*" As one who is unclean,—excluded from social intercourse; Gen. xlv. 34. Compare Job ix. 31; xix. 19; xxx. 10. "*I cannot come forth.*" The man suspected of leprosy was "shut up seven days:" Levit. xiii. 4.—*William Kay.*

Verse 9.—"*Mine eye mourneth,*" . . . "*I have called.*" Weeping must not hinder praying; we must sow in tears: "*Mine eye mourns,*" but "*I cry unto thee daily.*" Let prayers and tears go together, and they shall be accepted together: "*I have heard thy prayers, I have seen thy tears.*"—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 9.—The first clause seems literally to mean the soreness and dimness of sight caused by excessive weeping, and is so taken by many of the commentators, and Lorinus aptly quotes a Latin poet, *Catullus*, in illustration:—

Mœsta neque assiduo tabescere lumina fletu
Cessarent.

Nor my sad eyes to pine with constant tears
Could cease.

—*Neale's Commentary.*

Verse 10.—He assureth himself God would not fail to comfort him before he died; and again, that the Lord would rather miraculously raise him from the dead, than not glorify himself in his deliverance: and in this also he taketh a safe course, for he seeks for what he might expect, rather in an ordinary way, than by looking for miracles.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 10.—“*Shall the dead arise and praise thee?*” So far from this being an argument against the resurrection, it is Messiah’s own most powerful plea for it—that otherwise man would be deprived of salvation, and God of the praise which the redeemed shall give for it to all eternity. Thou canst not show wonders to the dead as such; for “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” (Matt. xxii. 32.) Or even if thou wert to show thy wonders, it is only by their rising to life again that they can duly praise thee for them.—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 10.—“*The dead.*” The word comes from a root which expresses what is weak and languid, and at the same time stretched out and long-extended, and which can accordingly be employed to describe the shadowy forms of the under world as well as the giants and heroes of the olden time.—*Carl Bernhard Moll, in Lange’s Commentary.*

Verse 10.—“*The dead.*” An attentive consideration seems to leave little room for doubt that the dead were called Rephaim (as Gesenius also hints) from some notion of Scheol being the residence of the fallen spirits or buried giants.—*F. W. Farrar, in Smith’s Dictionary of the Bible.*

Verses 10, 11.—Can my soul ever come to think I shall live in thy favour, in thy free grace and loving-kindness, to be justified by it, to apprehend myself a living man, and all my sins forgiven? To do this, saith he, is as great a wonder as to raise a man up from death to life; therefore he useth that expression, “*Will thou shew wonders to the dead?*” He calleth it a wonder; for of all works else, you shall find in Scripture the resurrection from the dead counted the greatest wonder.

The phrase in the 10th verse, as the Septuagint translates it, is exceeding emphatical. Saith he, “*Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? Shall the physicians arise and praise thee?*” So they read it, and so some good Hebreicians read it also; that is, Go send for all the college of physicians, all the angels out of heaven, all the skilful ministers and prophets that were then upon the earth, Gad and David, for he lived in David’s time; send for them all. All these physicians may come with their cordials and balms; they will never cure me, never heal my soul, never raise me up to life again, except thou raise me; for I am “free among the dead,” saith he. Now then, to work faith in such a one; for this poor soul, being thus dead, to go out of himself, and by naked and sheer faith to go to Jesus Christ alone, whom God raised from the dead, and to believe on him alone; this is now as great a power as indeed to raise a man up from death to life.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verses 10—12.—In these verses we find mention made of four things on the part of God: “wonders,” “loving-kindness,” “faithfulness,” and “righteousness.” These were four attributes of the blessed Jehovah which the eyes of Heman had been opened to see, and which the heart of Heman had been wrought upon to feel. But he comes, by divine teaching, into a spot where these attributes seem to be completely lost to him; and yet, (so mysterious are the ways of God!) that spot was made the very place where those attributes were more powerfully displayed, and made more deeply and experimentally known to his soul.

The Lord led the blind by a way that he knew not into these spots of experience, that in them he might more fully open up to him those attributes of which he had already gained a glimpse; but the Lord brought him in such a mysterious way, that all his former knowledge was baffled. He therefore puts up this inquiry to the Lord, how it was possible that in those spots where he now was, these attributes could be displayed or made known?

1. He begins—“*Will thou shew wonders to the dead?*” He is speaking here of his own experience; he is that “dead” person to whom those “wonders” are to be shown. And being in that state of experience, he considered that every act of mercy shown to him where he then was, must be a “wonder.” “*Shall the dead arise and praise thee?*” What! the dark, stupid, cold, barren, helpless soul, that cannot lift up one little finger, that cannot utter one spiritual word, that cannot put forth one gracious desire, that cannot lift up itself a hair’s breadth out of the mass that presses it down—“*Shall it arise?*” and more than that, “*praise thee?*” What! can lamentation ever be turned into praise? Can complaint ever be changed

into thanksgiving? Can the mourner ever shout and sing? Oh, it is a wonder of wonders, if "the dead" are to "arise," if "the dead" are to "praise thee;" if the dead are to stand upon their feet, and shout victory through thy blood!—*J. C. Philpot.*

Verse 11.—"In the grave." Here is a striking figure of what a living soul feels under the manifestations of the deep corruptions of his heart. All his good words, once so esteemed; and all his good works, once so prized; and all his prayers, and all his faith, and hope, and love, and all the imaginations of his heart, are not merely paralysed and dead, not merely reduced to a state of utter helplessness, but also in soul-feeling turned into rottenness and corruption. When we feel this we are spiritually brought where Heman was, when he said, "Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave?" What! wilt thou manifest thy love to a stinking corpse? What! is thy love to be shed abroad in a heart full of pollution and putrefaction? Is thy lovingkindness to come forth from thy glorious sanctuary, where thou sittest enthroned in majesty, and holiness, and purity,—is it to leave that eternal abode of ineffable light and glory, and enter into the dark, polluted, and loathsome "grave"? What! is thy lovingkindness to come out of the sanctuary into the charnel-house? Shall it be "declared" there—revealed there—spoken there—manifested there—made known there? For nothing else but the declaration of it there will do. He does not say, "Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the Scriptures?" "Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in Christ?" "Shall thy lovingkindness be declared by the mouth of ministers?" "Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in holy and pure hearts?"—but he says, "Shall thy lovingkindness be declared," uttered, spoken, revealed, manifested, "in the grave?" where everything is contrary to it, where everything is unworthy of it,—the last of all places fit for the lovingkindness of an all-pure God to enter.—*J. C. Philpot.*

Verse 11.—"Thy faithfulness in destruction." You will see God's faithfulness to have been manifested most,—in destruction. You will see God's faithfulness to his covenant most clearly evidenced in destroying your false religion, in order to set up his own kingdom in your soul; in destroying everything which alienated and drew away your affections from him, that he alone might be enshrined in your hearts; and you will say, when the Lord leads you to look at the path he has led you, in after years, "Of all God's mercies his greatest have been those that seemed at the time to be the greatest miseries; the richest blessings which he has given us, are those which came wrapped up in the outside covering of curses; and his faithfulness has been as much or more manifested in destruction, than in restoration."—*J. C. Philpot.*

Verse 11.—It is not by leaving man in the "destruction" which sin and death produce, that God will declare his "faithfulness" to his promises which have flowed out of his "loving-kindness;" for instance, his promise that the woman's seed should bruise the serpent's head (Gen. xiii. 15; and Hos. xiii. 14).—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 12.—"Wilt thou show thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?"—where I have forgotten thee, where I turned aside from thee, where I have let slip out of my memory all thy previous dealings with me—and shall thy righteousness be manifested even there? Wilt thou prove thine equity in showing forth mercy, because for me a sacrifice has been offered, thy righteousness running parallel with the atoning stream of Christ's blood? When I have forgotten thee and forsaken thee, and turned my back upon thee, can thy righteousness be there manifested? What! righteousness running side by side with mercy! and righteousness still preserving all its unbending strictness, because this very backsliding of heart, this very forgetfulness of soul, this very alienation of affection, this very turning my back upon thee, have all been atoned for; and righteousness can be still shown "in the land of forgetfulness," because all my sins committed in the land of forgetfulness have been atoned for by redeeming blood!—*J. C. Philpot.*

Verse 13.—"But," etc. That "but" seems to come in as an expression of his resolution hitherto, that though these were his apprehensions of his condition, yet he had sought the Lord, and would go on to do the same. Suppose thou findest no relish in the ordinances, yet use them; thou art desperately sick, yet eat still, take all that is brought thee, some strength will come of it. Say, "Be I damned or saved, hypocrite or no hypocrite, I resolve to go on."—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 13.—" *In the morning shall my prayer prevent thee.*" The morning prayer is the best. . . . In the morning God gave various gifts. First, the manna, Exod. xvi. 13, *And in the morning the dew lay round about the host* : He who is in the camp of God, and bravely fights, receives from God dew and consolation, if in the morning, that is, in the beginning of temptation, he prays. In the evening flesh was given, whence death overtook them, but in another case in the morning the manna was given, whereby life was sustained, until they came into the land of promise. Secondly, the law was given in the morning, Exod. xix. 16, *And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud.* In morning devotion the thunders of God, that is, his judgments, are more distinctly heard ; his lightnings, that is, his divine enlightenments, are best seen ; the thick cloud upon the mount, that is, the divine overshadowing of the soul, is perceived ; and the voice of the trumpet is best heard, that is, inspiration then with greater force moves the mind. Thirdly, in the morning, very early, the children of Israel went forth from Egypt ; for in the middle of the night God smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, Exod. xii. 29. . . . In the morning pray, and you shall conquer your daily and nightly foes ; and the Red Sea itself, that is, the place of temptation, shall be to thee a field of glory, of victory and exultation, and all things shall go well with thee.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 13.—" *Unto thee have I cried, O Lord.*" There is something concomitant with the Christian's present darkness of spirit, that distinguisheth it from the hypocrite's horror ; and that is the lively working of grace, which then commonly is very visible, when his peace and former comfort are most questioned by him ; the less joy he hath from any present sense of the love of God, the more abounding you shall find him in sorrow for his sin that clouded his joy ; the further Christ is gone out of his sight, the more he clings in his love to Christ, and vehemently cries after him in prayer, as we see in Heman here. O the fervent prayers that then are shot from his troubled spirit to heaven, the pangs of affection which are springing after God, and his face and favour ! Never did a banished child more desire admittance into his angry father's presence, than he to have the light of God's countenance shine on him, which is now veiled from him.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 14.—" *Why hidest thou thy face from me ?*" Numerous are the complaints of good men under this dark cloud ; and to a child of light it is indeed a darkness that may be felt ; it beclouds and bewilders the mind ; the brightest evidences are in a great measure hid ; the Bible itself is sealed, and fast closed ; we see not our signs, nor our tokens for good ; every good thing is at a distance from us, behind the cloud, and we cannot get at it ; there is a dismal gloom upon our path ; we know not where we are, where to step, nor which way to steer ; which way God is gone we know not, but he knoweth the way that we take ; and such a prayer as this suits us well,—Seek thy servants, for we are lost. Christ is hid, and there is a frowning cloud upon the sweet countenance of God, in which he hides his blessed face ; or, as he did to the disciples, holds our eyes, that we should not see him. But, though this is often the case with believers, and they cannot see one beam of light before them ; though all evidences are hid, and the light of the Lord's countenance is withdrawn ; though no signs nor love tokens appear ; and though the life-giving commandment is hid from them, and he shows them no wonders out of his law ; yet these Israelites have light in their dwellings—they have light to see the corruptions of their own hearts ; to see the workings of unbelief, legal pride, enmity, rebellion, the double diligence of Satan, and the wretched advantages he takes of them in these dark seasons.—*William Huntington.*

Verse 15.—" *I am afflicted.*" (*Vulg. Pauper sum ego.*) God more readily hears the poor, and gives himself wholly to them. First, his eyes, to behold them, Ps. xi. 5, "*His eyes behold the poor.*" Secondly, his ears, to hear them, Ps. x. 17, "*Thou wilt prepare their hearts, thou wilt cause thine ears to hear.*" Thirdly, his hand, to help, Ps. cvii. 41, "*Yet setteth he the poor on high from his affliction.*" Fourthly, his breast and his arms, to receive the fugitives and those in peril, Ps. lx. 9, "*The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed.*" Fifthly, memory to recollect for them, Ps. ix. 18, "*The needy shall not always be forgotten.*" Sixthly, intellect, to care for them, and watch over their comfort, Ps. xl. 17, "*But I am poor and needy ; yet the Lord thinketh upon me.*" Seventhly, goodwill, to love their prayers, Ps. xxii. 24, "*For he hath*

not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, neither hath he hid his face from him." Eighthly and lastly, he gives himself wholly to them, to preserve them, Ps. lxxii. 13, "*He shall save the souls of the needy.*"—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 15.—"*I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up.*" How much some suffer ! I have seen a child, who at the age of twenty months had probably suffered more bodily pain than the whole congregation of a thousand souls, where its parents worshipped. Asaph seems to have been of a sad heart. Jeremiah lived and died lamenting. Heman seems to have been of the same lot and of the same turn of mind.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 15.—(*First clause*). We found the heat more oppressive this day than we had yet experienced it. The hillocks of sand between which we were slowly moving at the usual camel's pace, reflected the sun's rays upon us, till our faces were glowing as if we had been by the side of a furnace. . . . Perhaps it was through this part of the desert of Shur that Hagar wandered, intending to go back to her native country ; and it may have been by this way that Joseph carried the young child Jesus when they fled into the land of Egypt. Even in tender infancy the sufferings of the Redeemer began, and he complains, "*I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up.*" Perhaps these scorching beams beat upon his infant brow, and this sand-laden breeze dried up his infant lips, while the heat of the curse of God began to melt his heart within. Even in the desert we see the suretyship of Jesus.—*R. M. McCheyne's "Narrative of a Mission of Inquiry to the Jews."*

Verse 15.—"*From my youth up.*" That is, for a long time ;—so long, that the remembrance of it seems to go back to my very childhood. My whole life has been a life of trouble and sorrow, and I have not strength to bear it longer. It may have been literally true that the author of the Psalm had been a man always afflicted ; or, this may be the language of strong emotion, meaning that his sufferings had been of so long continuance that they seemed to him to have begun in his very boyhood.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 15.—"*While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted.*" The word doth not signify properly the distraction of a man that is mad, but the distraction of a man that is in doubt. It is the distraction of a man who knows not what to do, not of a man who knows not what he doth, and yet that distraction doth often lead to a degree of this ; for a man who is much troubled to know what to do, and cannot know it, grows at last to do he knows not what.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 15.—"*While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted.*" The Psalm hath this striking peculiarity in it, namely, that it not only hath reference to the Lord Jesus Christ, and him alone ; but that he himself is the sole speaker from the beginning to the end. And although the whole of the Psalms are of him, and concerning him, more or less, and he is the great object and subject of all ; yet, secondarily and subordinately we meet with many parts in the Psalms where his church is also noticed, and becomes concerned, from union with him, in what is said. But in this Psalm there is allusion to no other.* All is of him and his incommunicable work. All is of the Son of God in our nature. It contains an account of the cries of the Lord Jesus "when in the days of his flesh he offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears."

The soul-agonies of Christ even from the moment of his incarnation to his death, may be contemplated, or read, from the sacred records of Scripture, but cannot come within the province of any created power to conceive, much less unfold. It is remarkable that whatever the Lord meant to convey by the phrase, "*I am distracted,*" this is the only place in the whole Bible where the word "*distracted*" is used. Indeed the inspired writers have varied their terms of expression, when speaking of Christ's sufferings, as if unable to convey any full idea. Matthew renders it that the Lord Jesus said : "*My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death !*" (Matt. xxvi. 38.) Mark describes him as "being sore amazed, and very heavy !" (Mark xiv. 33.) And Luke : his "being in an agony !" (Luke xxii. 44.) But here we must rest, in point of apprehension, for we can proceed no further.—*Robert Hawker.*

Verse 15.—O Lord, the monotony of my changeless days oppresses me, the constant weariness of my body weighs me down. I am weary of gazing on the same dull objects : I am tired of going through the same dull round day after day ; the very inanimate things about my room, and the patterns on the walls, seem

* We differ from Dr. Hawker in his exclusion of the saints from this Psalm. Where the Head is the members are never far away.—*Ed.*

quicken with the waste of my life, and, through the power of association, my own thoughts and my own pain come back upon me from them with a dull reverberation. My heart is too tired to hope; I dare not look forward to the future; I expect nothing from the days to come, and yet my heart sinks at the thought of the grey waste of years before me; and I wonder how I shall endure, whether I shall faint by the way, before I reach my far-off home.—From "*Christ the Consoler.*"

Verse 16.—"*Thy fierce wrath goeth over me.*" Like a sea of liquid fire; (xlii. 7).—*Heb.* "Thy hot wraths." LXX. αἱ ὀργαὶ σου.—*William Kay.*

Verse 16.—"*Thy terrors have cut me off.*" In the Hebrew verb the last syllable is repeated for the purpose of putting vehemence into the expression. The word נָפַץ signifies, to shut up and press into some narrow place, in order that one may not breathe or escape. . . . In this sense Gregory Nazianzen in his first oration concerning peace, calls grief δεσμον καρδιας (the prison of the heart).—*Mollerus.*

Verse 17.—"*Like water;*"—not merely because it drowns, but because it searches every crevice, goes to the very bottom, and makes its way on all sides when once it obtains an entrance, thus fitly denoting the penetrating force of temptation and trouble.—*Hugo Cardinalis.*

Verse 18.—"*Lover and friend hast thou put far from me,*" etc. Next to the joys of religion, those of friendship are most rational, sublime, and satisfactory. But they, like all other earthly joys, have their mixtures and alloys, and are very precarious. We are often called to weep with our friends, and sometimes to weep over them. Grief and tears for their death are the sad tribute we pay for loving and being beloved, and living long in this world. This seems to have been the case with the author of this melancholy Psalm, where our text is. He was exercised with great afflictions of body, and deep distress of mind. "His soul was full of troubles, and his life drew nigh to the grave. He was shut up and confined by weakness and pain, and could not go forth," to his business or pleasure, to the social or solemn assembly, ver. 3—8. He adds, that "he had been afflicted and ready to die from his youth up," v. 15; which seems to intimate that he was now an old man. Some of his acquaintance and friends had deserted him, and he was "become an abomination to them," v. 8. They would not assist him, nor afford him the comfort of a friendly visit, and the cheap kindness of a soft, compassionate word. Others of them, who would have been faithful and kind to him in his distress, were taken out of the world; and this at a time when, through age and infirmities, he peculiarly needed their company and assistance. To this he refers in the text; and with this he concludes the Psalm, as the heaviest stroke of all, "*Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness.*" This is a common case; and frequently the case of the aged. It is no unusual thing for old people to outlive their nearest relations; the companions of their lives; their children, and sometimes their grandchildren too; and they are, as the Psalmist expresseth it, "like a sparrow alone upon the house-top." . . .

What chiefly afflicted the Psalmist, and will afflict every generous heart, was, that his friends and lovers were removed into "*darkness;*" that is, to the grave, which is called in Scripture, "the land of darkness and the shadow of death, without any order or succession; and where the light is as darkness." Job x. 21, 22. They were put so far from him, that he could see them no more; were dead and buried out of his sight; neither would one of their friends on earth any more behold them. Thus are our friends put into darkness. The eyes that used to sparkle with pleasure, when we met after a long absence, are closed in death. The voice that used to delight and edify us is sealed up in everlasting silence. There is no conversing with them personally nor by letters. Not lands and seas divide us from them, but regions of vast, unknown space, which we cannot yet pass over; and which they cannot and indeed would not tread back, as much as they loved us. We have no way of conveying intelligence to them or receiving it from them. Perhaps they were put far away from us in their youth, or in the midst of their days and usefulness; when we promised ourselves many years of pleasure in their friendship and converse, and expected many years of service from them, for their families, for the church, and the world. Alas! one awful, fatal stroke hath broken down all the pleasing fabric of love and happiness.

But these are reflections which must not be dwelt upon. When they begin

to grow very painful, as they soon will, it is time to turn our thoughts to that which is the second thing observable in the text; namely, the Psalmist's devout acknowledgment of the hand of God in this affliction. "*Thou hast put them far from me.*" This good man, through the whole Psalm, ascribeth all his afflictions, and particularly the death of his friends, to the hand of God. He takes no notice of their diseases; he neither blames them for imprudence and delay, nor those who attended them for neglect or misapplication; but looks beyond all second causes to the great Lord of all; owns him as the supreme sovereign of every life, and disposer of every event. And we shall do well to make this idea of the blessed God familiar to our minds, as it is at once most instructive and most comfortable.

The holy Scriptures confirm the dictates of reason upon this subject; assuring us that God "maketh peace and createth evil;" that "out of the mouth of the Lord proceedeth evil and good;" that the most casual events are under his direction, so that "not a sparrow falleth to," nor lighteth on, "the ground without him;" much less do his rational creatures and children die without his notice and appointment. By whatever disease or casualties they die, it is God who "taketh away their breath, changeth their countenance, and sendeth them into darkness." With awful majesty God claimeth this as his prerogative; "I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand." (Deut. xxxii. 39.) He removeth our friends who hath a right to do it. They were our friends, but they are his creatures; and may he not do what he will with his own? He gave them life of his free goodness, and he hath a right to demand it when he pleaseth. Dear as they were to us, we must acknowledge they were sinners; and, as such, had forfeited their lives to the justice of God: and shall not he determine when to take them away? They were our friends; but do we not hope and believe that, by repentance, faith in Christ, and sanctifying grace, they were become his friends too; dear to him by many indissoluble ties? Hath he not then a superior claim to them, and a greater interest in them? Is it not fit that he should be served first? May he not call home his friends when he pleaseth? Shall he wait for, or ask, our consent first? He doth it, whom we cannot, dare not, gainsay. "Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him? who will say unto him, what doest thou?" (Job. ix. 12.) He doth it, who is infinitely good and wise; and doth everything in the best time and manner. His knowledge is perfect and unerring; his goodness boundless and never-failing. Though his judgments are a great deep, and his schemes utterly unsearchable by us; yet we may reasonably believe that he consulteth the happiness of his servants in what is most mysterious and most grievous; and his word giveth us the strongest assurance of it. So that whether we exercise the faith of Christians or the reason of men, we must acknowledge the hand of God, yea, his wisdom and goodness, in removing our acquaintance into darkness.—*Job Orton, 1717—1783.*

Verse 18.—"*Mine acquaintance into darkness.*" Rather, *my acquaintanceship is darkness.* that is, darkness is all I have to converse with; my circle of acquaintance is comprised in blank darkness.—*Ernest Hawkins.*

Verse 18.—To be discountenanced or coldly treated by Christian friends, is often a consequence of a believer's having forfeited his spiritual comfort. When the Lord is angry with his rebellious child, and is chastening him, he not only giveth Satan leave to trouble him, but permitteth some of the saints who are acquainted with him, to discountenance him, and by their cold treatment of him, to add to his grief. When the father of a family resolves the more effectually to correct his obstinate child, he will say to the rest of the household, "Do not be familiar with him; shew him no countenance; put him to shame." In like manner, when the Lord is smiting, especially with spiritual trouble, his disobedient child, he, as it were, saith to others of his children, "Have for a season no familiarity with him; treat him with coldness and neglect; in order that he may be ashamed, and humbled for his iniquity." Job, under his grievous affliction, complained thus, "He hath put my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me," etc. (ch. xix. 13—19). And likewise Heman, "*Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness.*" When the favour of God to the soul is clouded, the comfort of Christian society is also obscured. When He frowns on one, his children commonly appear to frown likewise; and when he makes himself strange to one, so for the most part do they. If a holy man, then, under trouble of spirit, begins to be treated with disregard, and even with contempt, by some of his Christian brethren, he ought not to be surprised; neither should he take occasion to be angry, or to quarrel with them; but he should look above them, and take the afflictive dispensation, only

out of the hand of the Lord, as a necessary part of the chastisement intended for him. He ought to say with respect to them, as David concerning Shimei, "The Lord hath bidden them;" or, as Heman did, "Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me."—*John Colquhoun.*

Verse 18.—The very rhythm of the last line shows that the piece is not complete. The ear remains in suspense; until the majestic lxxxixth shall burst upon it like a bright Resurrection-morning.—*William Kay.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—I. Confidence in prayer,—“God of my salvation.” II. Earnestness in prayer,—“I have cried.” III. Perseverance in prayer,—“Day and night.”—*G. R.*

Verse 2.—Prayer as an ambassador. I. An audience sought, or the benefit of access. II. Attention entreated, or the blessing of success. III. The Process explained, or prayer comes and God inclines.

Verse 3.—I. A good man is exposed to inward troubles. 1. To soul troubles. 2. To the soul full of troubles. II. To outward troubles. “My life,” etc. 1. From outward persecutions. 2. From inward griefs. III. To both inward and outward troubles at the same time. “Soul full,” etc., “and my life,” etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 4 (last clause).—Conscious weakness, painfully felt, at certain times, in various duties. Intended to keep us humble, to drive us to our knees, and to bring greater glory to God.

Verses 4, 5.—I. The resemblance of the righteous man to the wicked. 1. In natural death. 2. In bodily infirmities. II. His difference from them. He is “counted with them” but is not of them. 1. He experiences natural death only. 2. His strength is perfected in weakness. 3. For him to die is gain.—*G. R.*

Verses 6, 7.—I. What the afflictions of the people of God appear to be to themselves. 1. Extreme,—“laid me in the lowest pit.” 2. Inexplicable,—“in darkness.” 3. Humiliating,—“in the deeps.” 4. Severe,—“thy wrath lieth hard.” 5. Exhaustive,—“afflicted with all thy waves.” II. What they are in reality. 1. Not extreme, but light. 2. Not inexplicable, but according to the will of God. 3. Not humiliating, but elevating. “Humble yourselves under,” etc. 4. Not severe, but gentle. Not in anger, but in love. 5. Not exhaustive, but partial. Not all thy waves, but a few ripples only. The slight motion in the harbour when there is a boisterous ocean beyond.—*G. R.*

Verse 8 (last clause).—This may describe us when dependency is chronic, when trouble is overwhelming, when sickness detains us at home, when we feel restrained in Christian labour, or hampered in prayer.

Verse 9.—I. Sorrow before God,—“Mine eye,” etc. II. Prayer to God,—“I have called,” etc. III. Waiting for God,—“called daily.” IV. Dependence on God,—“I have stretched,” etc. These hands can do nothing without thee.—*G. R.*

Verses 10–12.—I. The supposition. 1. That a child of God should be wholly dead. 2. That he should remain for ever in the grave. 3. That he should be destroyed. 4. That he should always remain in darkness. 5. That he should be entirely forgotten, as though he had never existed. II. The consequences involved in this supposition. 1. God’s wonders to them would cease. 2. His praise from them would be lost. 3. His lovingkindness to them would be unknown. 4. His faithfulness destroyed. 5. His wonders to them would be lost to others. 6. His former righteousness to them would be forgotten. III. The plea founded upon these consequences,—“Wilt thou,” etc. It cannot be that thy praise for grace shown to thy people can be lost, and none can render it but themselves. “Then what wilt thou do unto thy great name?”—*G. R.*

Verse 13.—I. Blessings delayed to prayer,—“Unto thee,” etc. II. Blessings anticipated by prayer,—“In the morning,” etc. Daily mercies anticipated by morning prayers.—*G. R.*

Verse 13 (last clause).—The advantages of early morning prayer-meetings.

Verse 14.—I. Afflictions are mysterious though just. II. Just though mysterious.—*G. R.*

Verse 14.—Solemn enquiries, to be followed by searching examinations, by sorrowful confessions, stern self-denials, and sweet restorations.

Verse 15.—I. The afflictions of the righteous may be long continued though severe. “I am afflicted, etc., from my youth up.” II. Severe though long continued. 1. Painful,—“afflicted.” 2. Threatening,—“ready to die.” 3. Terrific,—“suffer thy terrors.” 4. Distracting,—“I am,” etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 15.—The personal sufferings of Christ for the salvation of his people.—*Sermon by Robert Hawker. Works, Vol. IV. p. 91.*

Verse 16.—I. Good men are often tried men. II. Tried men frequently misjudge the Lord's dealings. III. The Lord does not take them at their word, he is better than their fears.—*G. R.*

Verse 18.—The loss of friends intended to remind us of our own mortality, to wean us from earth, to lead us to more complete trust in the Lord, to chasten us for sin, and to draw us away to the great meeting place.

Verse 18.—The words of our text will lead us to remark that, I. The happiness of life greatly depends on intimate friendships. II. The trial of parting with intimate friends is exceedingly painful. III. In this, as indeed in every affliction, the best consolation is drawn from a belief in, and meditation upon, God's governing providence.—*Joseph Lathrop, 1845.*
