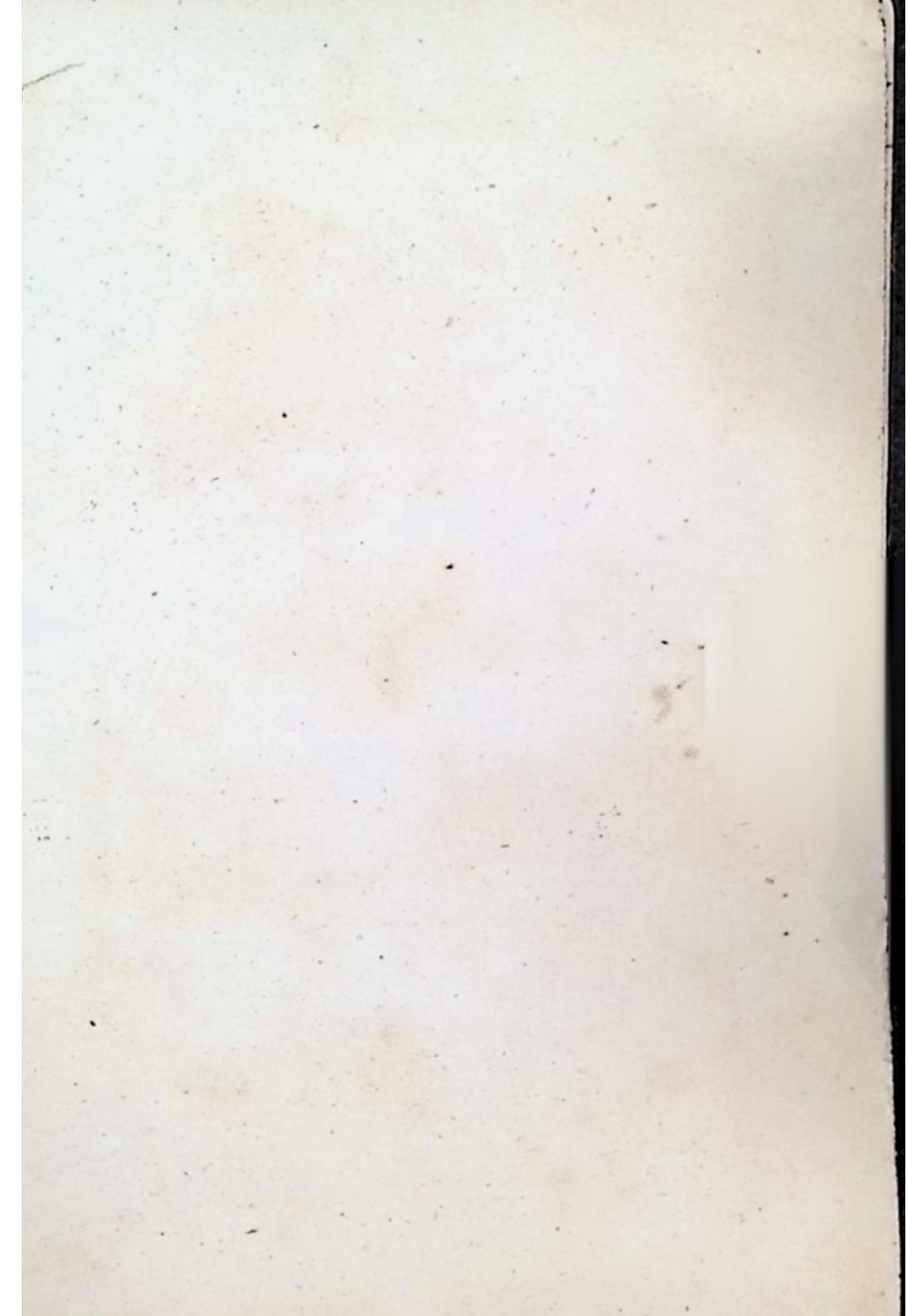


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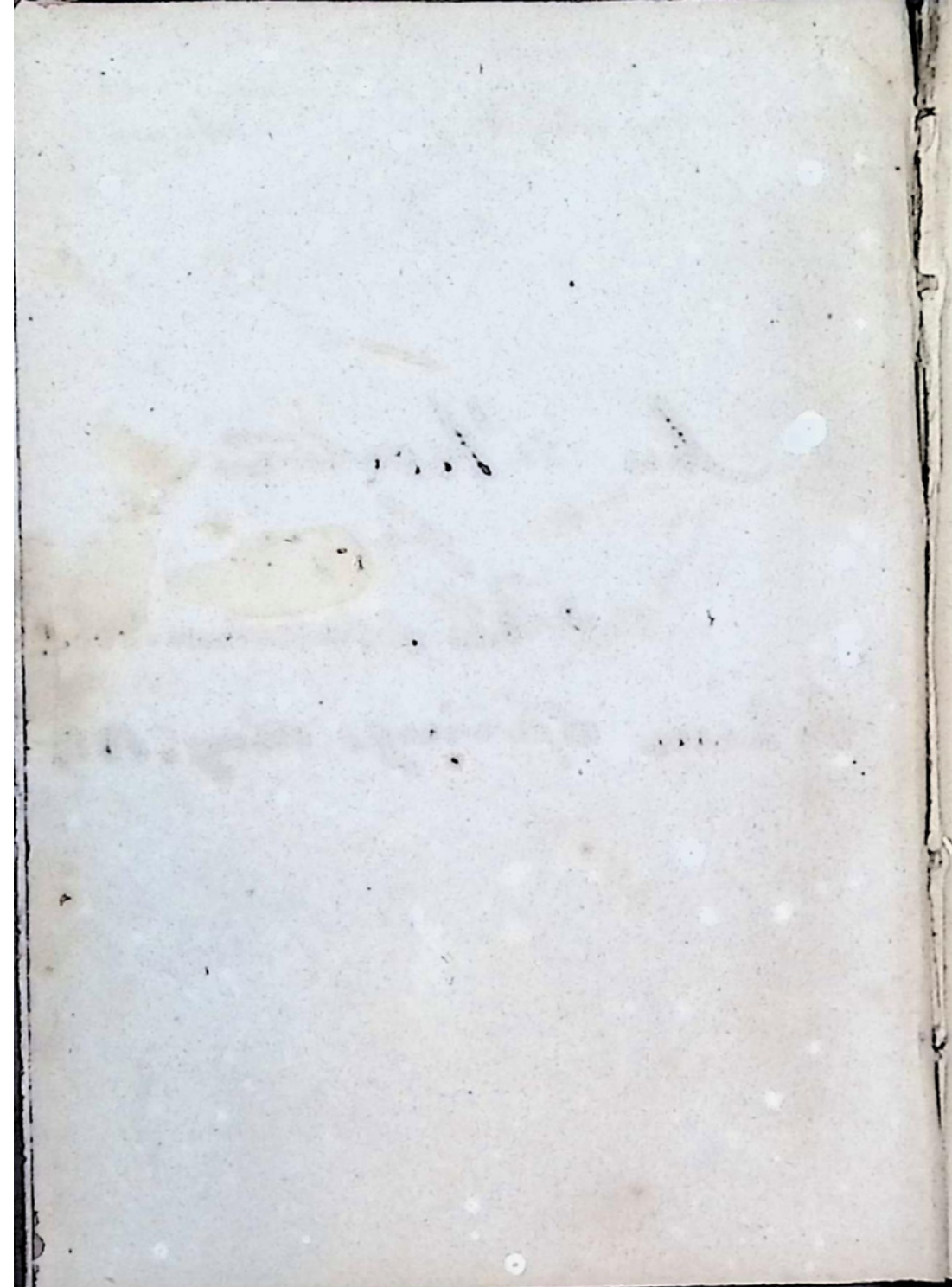
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Mrs Porter.
from.

Bos Artemas Gould.

Warren Springs Aug. 1858



*Mrs Shorter from
Winn Springs Aug 1858
Miss Artemas Gould, of
Augusta*

Wells of Baca;

OR,

SOLACES OF THE CHRISTIAN MOURNER,

AND

OTHER THOUGHTS ON BEREAVEMENT.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE FAITHFUL PROMISER," "NIGHT WATCHES,"

&c. &c.

"Who passing through the valley of BACA (weeping), make it
a WELL." — Psalm lxxxiv. 6.

FROM THE LONDON EDITION.

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TO
THE BEREAVED CHRISTIAN,
MOURNING THE LOSS
OF THOSE WHO HAVE FALLEN
"ASLEEP IN JESUS,"

THIS
Tribute of Sympathy

IS INSCRIBED.

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PREFACE

TO THE AMERICAN EDITION.

“EVERY heart knoweth its own bitterness,” and “a stranger is not permitted to intermeddle,”—yet we are commanded to “bear one another’s burdens;” and hence the law and duty of human sympathy. While it is true that there is a grief which no human power can relieve, and scarcely mitigate, it is no less true that the subjects of such grief are better fitted to endure their sorrow when assured of the tender sympathy of friends, than when left to pine away in lonely grief. Experience in the furnace of affliction is the best preparative to enable us to afford grateful succor to bereaved friends.

It is not well to shrink from society and refuse to be comforted. God chastens in love, and we do not wisely to close our eyes to the proofs of his goodness, or our ears to the consolatory suggestions of Christian friendship. By excluding friends,

we often debar ourselves from much valuable consolation—while by bidding them welcome we oftentimes “entertain angels unawares.”

We do well to weep in affliction, but not to abide in the “wells of weeping.” We should go upon the Mount of Vision daily, that we may see the field of duty spread out before us, and may learn how to honor God and bless our race, even when smarting under the rod. Afflictions certainly fail to accomplish what God intends when they lead us to wrap ourselves up in selfish sorrow, and neglect to perform what Providence indicates as our duty, in the constant and energetic discharge of our regular calling.

Affliction does us good when it burns off the dross, and burnishes the gold for present use and beauty. “Our sorrow becomes excessive when it withdraws the heart from God; when it drives us from the path of ordinary duty; when it destroys our enjoyment of the comforts which remain; when it impairs our sympathy with the griefs or joys of others; when it checks us in prayer, or in the exercises of faith, and love, and gratitude to our God and Saviour. Such feelings of grief are evidently immoderate, and ‘such sorrow worketh death.’”

The “WELLS OF BACA” is happily adapted to minister consolation to bruised and bleeding

hearts. It frankly admits the extent and depth of their sorrow, and tolerates a comparison between their past and present condition; it unfolds the nature of affliction, its source, and intent, and legitimate effect; while the furnace is exposed to view, the true solace is plainly pointed out, and the believer's crown is made to shine in Gospel purity and brilliancy.

This little volume has already afforded comfort to many sorrowing hearts, and has shown where alone the aching heads of God's afflicted children may find rest and ease. It is republished at the request of one who derived comfort from its perusal, and desired that it might be reprinted, that she might give a copy to her afflicted friends. May she — though now dead — be enabled by this little volume to address words of consolation to many stricken hearts.

ROXBURY, December, 1853.

GOD OF THE MOURNER! round whose awful
Throne

Peal the Hosannahs of the Heavenly Choir!
Vouchsafe, in love, a feebler note to own
Of Earthly Minstrelsy! Do Thou inspire
The plaintive chords of an untutor'd Lyre,
Touch'd with a trembling hand and tearful eye;
And if one borrow'd spark of sacred fire
Should soothe a grief, or mitigate a sigh,
The Glory all be Thine—THOU TRIUNE DEITY!

(8)

The Contrast.

Who can unfold the secrets of the heart
Torn with bereavement? Sacred pangs are there
With which a stranger dare not intermeddle,
Too sad for utterance, too deep for tears!
Oh! how one blow can metamorphose life;
Transmute into the saddest what was once
The happiest home, and open bleeding wounds
Which Heaven alone can medicate! The *Past*!
What volumes that emphatic word contains
Of tender recollections! hallow'd hours,—
Soothing life's sorrows—sweetening its joys.
The *Future*! Once the calendar of bliss,
Its firmament bedeck'd with lustrous stars
Of brilliant promise, suddenly eclipsed;
Now treasuring in desolate perspective
Ills hitherto undreaded. Hear the verdict
Of the Bereaved spirit, on a World
Invested once with many nameless charms,
But now so sadly alter'd:—"That bright sun

May shine as brightly as it did before—
Its light seems dim to me! Those emerald fields,
And crested hills, and undulating slopes,
The shady groves, and softly-murmuring streams,
Where once, with joyous steps, I loved to rove,
A thousand scenes and images recall
Of happier hours irrevocably gone;
While faithful memory (sad chronicler
Of bygone bliss) invests the retrospect
With all but living truth. The melody
Of cherish'd voices seems to linger there;
Each sylvan footpath has its tear to claim,
And tale of buried love. Each rivulet
Warbles the music of some fond delights
Ne'er to return again. Once how I loved
To mark the changing year! each varying season
Revolving bliss. The winter's blazing hearth,
When the wild storm was revelling without,
Endearing all the more a cherish'd home.
But now in vain it wastes its crackling mirth
On the lone heart. More apposite appears
That sweeping tempest, rioting at will,
Wing'd with the thunder—in its wild career
Bearing destruction—Nature's bosom strewn

With trophies of its might. And yet, methinks,
Its burden'd sighs and moanings seem to lend
The broken heart a sympathy, which oft
A cold and selfish world denies ! Or, when
The waning season's devastating blasts
Of rude continuance, made the eye to long
For the return of spring, how once I loved
To watch the footsteps of the new-born year !
The Earth (long sepulchred) emerging from
The Grave of Winter, and her winding-sheet
Of snow exchanging, to be deck'd anew
In emerald robes of renovated life.
The warbling choristers of wood and grove
That sung so late their plaintive Elegies,
As if Chief-Mourners o'er her Tomb, again
Vocal with praise ! Ah ! sadly, strangely sounds
To the bereaved heart such symphony !
These tuneless melodies by hill and dale,
Of pensive sorrow latent chords awake,
Which make the bosom powerless to respond
To Nature's joy ! Where is the voice whose music
Was more to me than all the world beside ?
The noonday sun his dazzling lustre pours,
These winged choristers now tune their notes

Around that Grave ! The bursting loveliness
Of the incipient year, seems but to mock
The desolated spirit, which is destined
To know no spring-time. Universal nature
Starts from her slumber. But there is one sleep
Too deep to be disturb'd. One Ear remains
Closed to the summons ! While th' imprison'd
Earth

Bursts from her wintry dungeon, where the storm
And tempest (gloomy warders) guarded her,
This stern Custodier of captive millions
Alone denies surrender ! Spring may clothe
The Churchyard's sacred sod with fresher verdure,
Or lend her glistening dew (expressive tear-drops)
To mingle their mute sympathy, and wail
Life's tender blossoms blighted in the bud ;
But her reanimating voice in vain
Evokes the ashes slumbering underneath !

“ Oh ! happy peasant ! When thy daily task
Of weary toil is over, how I envy
Thy cheerful step and artless rustic strains,
(Faithful exponents !) oft, as homewards tending
On Summer eve, to meet the joyous welcome

To affluence oft denied—the mirthful glee
Of *an unbroken circle*—word unknown
In many a lordly hall and proud demesne.”

But hush these plaintive musings—all thy tears
Cannot weep back the buried! True, at times
Nature expression to her brooding grief
Must be permitted. Cold indeed the heart
That would presume the tribute to refuse
Of friendship’s tenderness to friendship’s worth,
And libel it unmanliness to mourn!
There is a sacred luxury in tears
None but the lacerated bosom knows.
If Stoical philosophy forbid
Their gentle flow, go mark at Bethany
The wondrous tear-drops of the Man of Sorrows.
Mourner, be this thy warrant, “*Jesus Wept!*”

Yet be it thine to check superfluous grief;
And, if the pensive spirit love to linger
On treasured recollections, waste not thoughts,
Indulge not vain regrets, on happiness
Beyond recall; but read emphatic lessons
(For ever reading, yet how hard to learn!)

On Earth's delusive pleasures,—airy bubbles
Dancing their little moment on the stream,
Then vanishing for ever;—plants which fade
(Like the recorded gourd of Nineveh)
Just when most needed; breeding their own worm,
And, in their freshness, yielding to decay!

Go! estimate amid the humbling wrecks
Of broken cisterns and of blighted joys,
The worth of the vain world which has deceived
thee.

Strange, that it should so long with Siren voice
Have lullaby'd thy spirit, weaving dreams
Of visionary bliss around thy path,—
Baseless enchantments, ne'er to know fruition!
The *World!* 'Tis but a synonyme for change.
As well recline thy head upon the surge,
The ever-varying billow. Like the Dove
Which, of old, track'd a wilderness of waves,
With weary pinion and with wailing cry,
Roaming the waste to find a leafy bough
Whereon to set its foot; so does the Soul
(Pluming immortal pinions for the flight)
Traverse the world's tumultuous sea in vain

To find a resting-place—"It findeth none!"
Life is one scene of Tempest! There may be
Lulls in the sweeping storm—the alternations
Of cloud and sunshine; but no more than gleams:
Not the true lustre of the fixed star;
Rather the fitful meteoric glare,
One moment dazzling with its lurid light,
The next all dark, and, by the power of contrast,
Darkness more sensible! E'en when the cup
Of life is fullest, is it not enough
To mar its brightest hour of festive joy
(As did the characters of living fire,
Which gleam'd of old amid the revelries
Of Chaldee's lords)—the possibility
That Death *may* soon, the certainty he *must*
At some time come, and write his MENE TEKEL
Upon the clay-built walls? The tie to life
How frail! There is, between us and the grave,
Nought but a breath! To-day the bark may spread
Her canvas to the gale; all may presage
A prosp'rous voyage, fann'd by gentle zephyrs.
One creaking plank the morrow may reveal!
Seal'd is her doom; the starting timber yields,
And down she sinks into the eddying wave,

A shatter'd wreck! Oh! whither shall we flee,
'Mid the convulsion of these thick'ning storms
(This heaving ocean of vicissitude),
To find some quiet haven of repose
Safe from the tempest shock? Lo! from an Ark,
Riding triumphant o'er the angry deep,
Accents of love proceed! It is the voice
Of an unchanging God, changeless alone
Amid all-change! Oh, blessed hiding-place!
As louder raged the hurricane of old,
And mightier was the flow of gushing waters
On a submerged Earth, the higher rose
Upon the bosom of the foaming surge,
Proof to the roar of elemental war,
The Patriarch's ark; so, Christian Mourner! safe
Within thy Cov'nant Shelter, wave on wave
May roll successive over thee, as if
The rifled fountains of the deep were suffer'd
To riot at their pleasure; but each billow
Uplifts thee farther from the Shores of Time
Nearer thy God; and as behind thou leav'st
A devastated Earth, Faith elevates
Above the wrecks of sublunary bliss,
And brings thee to the golden gates of Heaven!