

To Colonel Robert Hammond: These,

'Knottingley, near Pontefract,' 25th November, 1648.

DEAR ROBIN,

No man rejoiceth more to see a line from thee than myself. I know thou has long been under trial. Thou shalt be no loser by it. All 'things' must work for the best.

Thou desirest to hear of my experiences. I can tell thee: I am such a one as thou didst formerly know, having a body of sin and death; but I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord there is no condemnation, though much infirmity; and I wait for the redemption. And in this poor condition I obtain mercy, and sweet consolation through the Spirit. And find abundant cause every day to exalt the Lord, and abase flesh,-and herein I have some exercise.

As to outward dispensations, if we may so call them: we have not been without our share of beholding some remarkable providences, and appearances of the Lord. His presence hath been amongst us, and by the light of His countenance we have prevailed. We are sure, the goodwill of Him who dwelt in the Bush has shined upon us; and we can humbly say, We know in whom we have believed; who can and will perfect what remaineth, and us also in doing what is well-pleasing in His eyesight.

I find some trouble in your spirit; occasioned first, not only by the continuance of your sad and heavy burden, as you call it, but 'also' by the dissatisfaction you take at the ways of some good men whom you love with your heart, who through this principle, That it is lawful for a lesser part, if in the right, to force 'a numerical majority' &c.

To the first: Call not your burden sad or heavy. If your Father laid it upon you, He intended neither. He is the Father of lights, from whom comes every good and perfect gift; who of His own will begot us, and bade us count it all joy when such things befall us; they being for the exercise of faith and patience, whereby in the end (James i.) we shall be made perfect.

Dear Robin, our fleshly reasonings ensnare us. These make us say, "heavy," "sad," "pleasant," "easy." Was there not a little of this when Robert Hammond, through dissatisfaction too, desired retirement from the Army, and thought of quiet in the Isle of Wight? Did not God find him out there? I believe he will never forget this.-And now I perceive he is to seek again; partly through his sad and heavy burden, and partly through his dissatisfaction with friends' actings.

Dear Robin, thou and I were never worthy to be doorkeepers in this Service. If thou wilt seek, seek to know the mind of God in all that chain of Providence, whereby God brought thee thither, and that Person to thee; how, before and since, God has ordered him, and affairs concerning him: and then tell me,

Whether there be not some glorious and high meaning in all this above what thou has yet attained? And, laying aside thy fleshly reason, seek of the Lord to teach thee what that is; and He will do it. I dare be positive to say, It is not that the wicked should be exalted that God should so appear as indeed He hath done. For there is no peace to them. No, it is set upon the hearts of such as fear the Lord, and we have witness upon witness, That it shall go ill with them and their partakers. I say again, seek that spirit to teach thee; which is the spirit of knowledge and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, of wisdom and of the fear of the Lord. That spirit will close thine eyes and stop thine ears, so that thou shalt not judge by them; but thou shalt judge for the meek of the Earth, and thou shalt be made able to do accordingly. The Lord direct thee to that which is well-pleasing in His eyesight.

As to thy dissatisfaction with friends' actings upon that supposed principle, I wonder not at that. If a man take not his own burden well, he shall hardly others'; especially if involved by so near a relation of love and Christian brotherhood as thou art. I shall not take upon me to satisfy; but I hold myself bound to lay my thoughts before so dear a friend. The Lord do His own will.

You say: "God hath appointed authorities among the nations, to which active or passive obedience is to be yielded. This resides in England in the Parliament. Therefore active or passive resistance" &c.

Authorities and powers are the ordinance of God. This or that species is of human institution, and limited, some with larger, others with stricter bands, each one according to its constitution. 'But' I do not therefore think the Authorities may do anything, and yet such obedience be due. All agree that there are cases in which it is lawful to resist. If so, your ground fails, and so likewise the inference. Indeed, dear Robin, not to multiply words, the query is, Whether ours be such a case? This ingenuously is the true question.

To this I shall say nothing, though I could say very much; but only desire thee to see what thou findest in thy own heart to two or three plain considerations: First, Whether *Salus Populi* be a sound position? Secondly, Whether in the way in hand, really and before the Lord, before whom conscience has to stand, this be provided for;-or if the whole fruit of the War is not like to be frustrated, and all most like to turn to what it was, and worse? And this, contrary to Engagements, explicit Covenants with those who ventured their lives upon those Covenants and Engagements, without whom perhaps, in equity, relaxation ought not to be? Thirdly, Whether this Army be not a lawful Power, called by God to oppose and fight against the King upon some stated grounds; and being in power to such ends, may not oppose one Name of Authority, for those ends, as well as another Name,-since it was not the outward Authority summoning them that by its power made the quarrel lawful, but the quarrel was lawful in itself? If so, it may be, acting will be justified in *foro humano*.-But truly this kind of reasonings may be but fleshly, either with or against: only it is good to try what truth may be in them. And the Lord teach us.

My dear Friend, let us look into providences; surely they mean somewhat. They hang so together; have been so constant, so clear, unclouded. Malice, sworn malice against God's people, now called "Saints," to root out their name;-and yet they, 'these poor Saints,' getting arms, and therein blessed with defence and more!-I desire, he that is for a principle of suffering would not too much slight this. I slight not him who is so minded: but let us be where lest fleshly reasoning see more safety in making use of this principle than in acting! Who acts, if he resolve not through God to be willing to part with all? Our hearts are very deceitful, on the right and on the left.

What think you of Providence disposing the hearts of so many of God's people this way,-especially in this poor Army, wherein the great God has vouchsafed to appear! I know not one Officer among us but is on the increasing hand. And let me say, it is after much patience,-here in the North. We trust the same Lord who hath framed our minds in our actings is with us in this also. And all contrary to a natural tendency, and to those comforts our hearts could wish to enjoy as well as others. And the difficulties probably to be encountered with, and the enemies:-not few; even all that is glorious in this world. Appearance of united names, titles and authorities 'all against us;'-and yet not terrified 'we;' only desiring to fear our great God, that we do nothing against His will. Truly this is our condition.

And to conclude. We in this Northern Army were in a waiting posture; desiring to see what the Lord would lead us to. And a declaration is put out, at which many are shaken:-although we could perhaps have wished to stay of it till after the treaty, yet seeing it is come out, we trust to rejoice in the will of the Lord, waiting His farther pleasure.-Dear Robin, beware of men; look up to the Lord. Let Him be free to speak and command in thy heart. Take heed of the things I fear thou hast reasoned thyself into; and thou shalt be able through Him, without consulting flesh and blood, to do valiantly for Him and His people.

Thou mentionest somewhat as if, by acting against such opposition as is like to be, there will be a tempting of God. Dear Robin, tempting of God ordinarily is either by acting presumptuously in carnal confidence, or in unbelief through diffidence: both these ways Israel tempted God in the wilderness, and He was grieved by them. Not the encountering 'of' difficulties, therefore, makes us to tempt God; but the acting before and without faith. If the Lord have in any measure persuaded His people, as generally He hath, of the lawfulness, nay of the duty,-this persuasion prevailing upon the heart is faith; and acting thereupon is acting in faith; and the more the difficulties are, the more the faith. And it is most sweet that he who is not persuaded have patience towards them that are, and judge not: and this will free thee from the trouble of others' actings, which, thou sayest, adds to thy grief. Only let me offer two or three things, and I have done.

Dost thou not think this fear of the Levellers (of whom there is no fear) "that they would destroy Nobility," '&c.' has caused some to take up corruption, and find it lawful to make this ruining hypocritical Agreement, on one part? Hath not this biassed even some good men? I will not say, the thing they fear will

come upon them; but if it do, they will themselves bring it upon themselves. Have not some of our friends by their passive principle (which I judge not, only I think it liable to temptation as well as the active, and neither of them good but as we are led into them of God, and neither of them to be reasoned into, because the heart is deceitful),-been occasioned to overlook what is just and honest, and to think the people of God may have as much or more good the one way than the other? Good by this Man,-against whom the Lord hath witnessed; and whom thou knowest: Is this so in their hearts; or is it reasoned, forced in?

Robin, I have done. Ask we our hearts, Whether we think that, after all, these dispensations, the like to which many generations cannot afford,-should end in so corrupt reasonings of good men; and should so hit the designings of bad? Thinkest thou in thy heart that the glorious dispensations of God point out to this? Or to teach His people to trust in Him, and to wait for better things,-when, it may be, better are sealed to many of their spirits? And I, as a poor looker-on I had rather live in the hope of that spirit 'which believes that God doth so teach us,' and take my share with them, expecting a good issue, than be led away with the others.

This trouble I have been at, because my soul loves thee, and I would not have thee swerve, or lose any glorious opportunity the Lord puts into thy hand. The Lord be thy counsellor. Dear Robin, I rest thine,

OLIVER CROMWELL.