

**THE WIDOW:
DIRECTED TO THE
WIDOW'S GOD**

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The Widow: Directed to the Widow's God by John Angell James

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BY

JOHN ANGELL JAMES

WITH AN INTRODUCTION.

"LET THE WIDOWS TRUST IN ME."—JER. XLIX. 11

NEW YORK:
ROBERT CARTER & BROTHERS,
285 BROADWAY.

1852.

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INTRODUCTION.

It is a remarkable fact, that the present volume is the only one devoted especially to the consolation of the widow. This does not arise from any want of feeling for the afflicted and sorrowing. Many works of great value have been written for mourners: but still the widow, in all her peculiar loneliness and severity of grief, has been only incidentally noticed in these volumes, or grouped with the great multitude of the bereaved. This certainly is not to be attributed to any intentional neglect or want of sympathy for those whom God hath made desolate. In christian countries, such have a very strong hold upon the affections of the community. They also readily command the assistance of all men. We are conscious, that the mere sight of woman clad in the weeds of widowhood, sensibly affects the heart and awakens emotions of instinctive sympathy. Still, the widow, until now, could find no book, written spe-

cially for her, and adapted to her peculiar condition, which she could take with her into her solitude. It is true, in the consolations which have been administered to the bereaved and sorrowing, there was much which would apply to the general condition of the widow. It is true, in the Bible were to be found many rich and precious assurances of special interest in the heart of God, and of protection for herself and fatherless children. But these lie scattered, and seemed to be almost too great and glorious to be meant for the poor sufferer, well nigh consumed by the intensity of her agony. There is something so sacred and touching in the sorrows of widowhood;—something which so instinctively shrinks away from the public gaze, and seeks retirement, where alone and unwatched, the heart may pour out the freshness of its grief, that I do not wonder that pious men have forbore publicly to address the widow, lest they might only wound the deeper, when they merely sought to sympathise and give direction to her sorrow.

It must be admitted, that few men could with much hope of success, undertake a task so delicate. Properly to perform it, required not only a warm and generous heart, a clear and discriminating intellect, a practical acquaintance with the laws of the human mind, but also personal experience in similar grief

In all these respects, the gifted author of this volume is eminently qualified. Those who are acquainted with him through his writings—and much more, those who have enjoyed his personal friendship—are persuaded, that Mr. James has not only a mind at once of simplicity and elegance, but possesses a heart of unusual generosity—alive to every appeal of sorrow. Besides this, the past dispensations of Providence have made him familiar with the realities of bereavement. The wife of his youth was early taken from him, and for a considerable period he knew the deep solicitude and the pensive sorrow of him that mourneth apart. Nay, more than this, even whilst preparing this volume of consolation, all the sorrows of the past have been quickened into life, and new fountains of grief opened in his heart. By letters recently received, we learn that his present companion, a lady of peculiar excellence, both intellectual and moral, is rapidly, though sweetly, passing to the skies. Thus has Providence most singularly prepared this man of God to perform the delicate task of speaking to the widow, and by anticipated sorrows, mingling deep sympathy with her drear and cheerless solitude. Whilst he hands forth the cup of consolation, he assures the mourner that it has virtue; for he has tasted it, and proved its power.

With the poet he can say, and thus teach every mourner to say—

“What though a cloud o’ershade my sight,
Big with affliction’s tear ;
Yet FATE, amid the drops that fall,
Discerns a rainbow there.”

It will not be thought strange, when the circumstances are considered under which this book was prepared, that it is the most precious of all his works. There is a subdued and tender spirit breathed into every paragraph and sentence. There is something which seizes upon the best feelings of the man, awakening a livelier interest in the daughters of affliction.

There is so much of God in these pages,—the milder and more lovely attributes of his nature are made so delightfully prominent, that the voice of murmuring must be hushed. The divine wisdom is so clearly illustrated, carrying forward the purposes of benevolence, even by the agency of death, that the heart must confide in God and be contented.

“With patience, then, the course of duty run,
God nothing does, nor suffers to be done,
But you yourself would do, if you could see
The end of all events as well as He.”

W. P.

New-York, May 1841.

PREFACE.

ONE of the errands on which the Son of God came from heaven to earth, was to bind up the broken-hearted, and to comfort all that mourn: and during his sojourn upon earth, the tenderest sympathy was one of the virtues which adorned that holy nature, in which dwelt, as in its temple, "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

Like their Divine Master, the ministers of the gospel ought to be sons of consolation, and to perform the functions of a comforter, as well as those of an instructor: for if pure and undefiled religion, as regards the professors of christianity, consists, in part, of visiting the widow and fatherless in their affliction, how much more incumbent is it on its teachers, to cherish and to manifest the same tenderness of spirit towards this deeply suffering portion of the human family. A group of children gathered round a widowed mother, and sobbing out their sorrows, as she repeats to them, amidst many tears, their father's loved and honoured name, is one of those pictures of woe, on which few can look with an unmoistened eye.

Is it not strange, then, that with claims upon our sympathy, so strong and so generally acknowledged,