

your Sister is departed in her innocence - "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven" - For you, if your lives are prolonged, there will be duties & trials in store, for which you must prepare by self government, & for which God will prepare you, if you stedfastly trust in His promises, & pray for that grace which is never withheld from humble & assiduous prayer.

My Children God alone knows how long I may be spared to you. I am more solicitous to provide for your peace of mind, & for your everlasting interest, than for your worldly fortunes - As I have acted for myself in that respect, so do I feel for you - The longer I may live, the better in all likelihood, will be the provision which may be made for you - Large it can never be. Tho' whenever the hour comes, there will be enough with prudence & good conduct, for respectability & comfort - But were it left, my heart would be at rest concerning you, were I well & believed that you were imbued with those principles, & had carefully cultivated in yourselves those dispositions, which will make you heirs of eternal life -

I copy this letter for each of you with my own hand. It will be read with grief now - but there will come a time when you may think of it with a solemn rather than melancholy pleasure, & feel grateful for this proof of love - Take it then, with the blessing of,

Your afflicted & affectionate father  
Robert Southey

July 19 - 1826 -

"

17

My dear Daughters -

I write rather than speak to you on this occasion, because I can better bear to do it, & because what is written will remain & may serve hereafter for consolation & admonishment - of which the happiest and best of us stand but too often in need -

If any thing could at this time increase my sorrow for the death of one who was the pride of my eyes & the joy of my heart, it would be that there are so many who have their full share of it - When your dear Mother & I were last visited with a like affliction, you were too young to comprehend its nature -

You feel & understand it now, but you are also capable of profiting by it, & laying to your hearts the parental exhortations which I address to you while they are wounded & open -

This is but the first trial of many such which are in store for you - Who may be summoned next, is known only to the all-wise Disposer of all things - Some of you must have to mourn for others - some one for all the rest - It may be the will of God that I should follow

more of my children to the Grace - or in the ordinary course of nature, & happiest issue, they may see their parents depart.

Did we consider these things wisely, we should perceive how little it imports, who may go first, who last - of how little consequence sooner or later is, in what month we must all depart. When our time comes - all to be reunited in a better state of existence, then we shall part no more -

Our business here is to get ourselves for that state; - Not by depreciating or renouncing the pleasures which may innocently & properly be enjoyed, but by correcting the faults to which we are prone - cultivating our better dispositions, doing the will of God, by doing all we can for others, & fixing our dearest hopes on Heaven, which is our resting place & our everlasting home -

My children you have all of you brought into the world good dispositions - I bless God for it, more than for all the other blessings which he has vouchsafed me - But the best dispositions require self watchfulness, as there is no garden but what produces weeds - Blessed be God, I have never seen in either of you, any one symptom of an evil nature - Against great sins, there is no occasion to warn you: But it is by guarding against little ones, that we acquire a holy habit of mind, which is the true foundation of happiness here & hereafter -

You know how I loved you dear Sister, my sweet Isabel

who is now gathered to that part of my family & household (a large one now!) which is in Heaven - I can truly say my desire has been to make you childless happy, as I would fain make your youth, & pray that God may make the remainder of your days -

And for the dear Child who is departed, God knows that I never heard her name mentioned, nor spoke, nor thought of her, without affection or delight - Yet this day when I am about to see her mortal remains committed earth to earth, it is a grief for me to think that I have ever by a harsh or hasty word, given her even a momentary sorrow which might have been spared -

Check in yourselves then I beseech you, the first impulses of impatience, peevishness, ill humour, anger & resentment - I do not charge you with being prone to these sins: - far from it - but there is proneness enough to them in human nature - They are easily subdued in their beginnings - If they are yielded to they gather strength & virulence, & lead to certain unhappiness in all the relations of life - a meek, submissive, obliging disposition is worth all other qualities - I beseech you therefore to bear & forbear - carefully to guard against giving offence, & more carefully (for this is the more needful admonition) to guard against taking it. A soft answer turneth away wrath -

There is no shield against wrongs so effectual as an unresisting temper - You will soon find the reward of my conquest you shall thus obtain over yourselves -

The satisfaction is immediate, & the habit of equanimity which is thus easily acquired, will keep you all your enjoyments here, as well as enable you better to support those afflictions which are inseparable from humanity -