

distress

TTBB div., unaccompanied

Reginald Unterseher, arr.

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So fades the lovely, blooming flow'r;
 Frail, smiling solace of an hour;
 So soon our transient comforts fly,
 And pleasure only blooms to die.

Is there no kind, no healing art
 To soothe the anguish of the heart?
 Spirit of grace, be ever nigh;
 Thy comforts are not made to die

Let gentle patience smile on pain,
 Till dying hope revives again;
 Hope wipes the tear from sorrow's eye,
 And faith points upward to the sky.

---Anne Steele, 1760

This poem, though written in 1760 as a hymn and appearing in *Southern Harmony* and other hymnals, is not so much theological as it is a heart-wrenching expression of sorrow and loss.

Anne Steele was no stranger to this subject matter. Her mother died when Anne was only three years old. When she was 19, she sustained an injury to her hip, which left her permanently disabled. She was engaged to be married when she was 21, and on the day of her wedding, her fiance drowned.

This setting was inspired by the Civil War soldiers who would have known this from the hymnals of the time. The music starts with a quiet statement of fragments of the tune over a drone, like the soldiers in the quiet introspection of a night in the field. We then hear the first verse over a minimal accompaniment. The second verse begins with a driving, marching accompaniment, with the verse now stated in a more bitter, angry way with an overlay reminiscent of the ghosts of their fallen comrades. In the last verse, we hear resignation and acceptance as all the voices come together, before going back to a reflection of the opening.

The tune, *DISTRESS*, is unattributed in *Southern Harmony*, and was probably written by William Walker.

distress

words: Anne Steele
tune: DISTRESS
from "Southern Harmony," pub 1831

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♩ = 60 *keening*

TENOR 1 *mp+* *p*
* *hmm*

TENOR 2 *mp+*
* *hmm*

BASS 1 *mp+* *p* *mp+*
* *hmm*

BASS 2 *mp+* *p+* *mp+*
* *hmm* *hmm*

*audible 'h'
may substitute open mouthed "ng" throughout

7

mf *portamento* *mp+* *p+*
hmm *hmm*

mf *p+*

mf *p+* *portamento* *mp* *mp* *p+*
hmm *hmm*

14 *mp drained, empty*

1. So fades the love - ly bloom-ing_ flow'r, Frail, smil-ing sol - ace of an_ hour,

mp

1. So fades the love - ly bloom-ing_ flow'r, Frail, smil-ing sol - ace of an_ hour,

20

So soon our tran-sient com-forts fly, And plea-sure on - ly___ blooms to_ die._

So soon our tran-sient com-forts fly, And plea-sure on - ly___ blooms to_ die._

A $\text{♩} = 64$

26

trudging
mf

toom toom too too too_ toom toom too too too_ toom toom too too too_

mf

toom too too_ toom too too_ toom too too_ toom too too_

31

p legato

oo_

mf bitterly, non-legato

2. Is there no kind, no heal - ing_ art_ To soothe the an - guish

toom toom too too too_ toom toom too too too_ toom toom too too too_ toom toom too too too_

toom too too_ toom too too_ toom too too_ toom too too_

35

of the_ heart? Spir - it of grace, be ev - er nigh;

toom toom too too too_ toom toom too too too_ toom toom too too too_

toom too too_ toom too too_ toom toom too_

*with resignation
in every breath, take
your time on the rests*

39

pp

$\text{♩} = 56$

B *molto legato*

pp

3. Let gen-tle

Thy com-forts are not made to_ die. 3. Let gen-tle

3. Let gen-tle

3. Let gen-tle

43

pa-tience smile on_ pain, Till dy-ing hope re - vives a - gain; Hope wipes the

pa-tience smile on_ pain, Till dy-ing hope re - vives a - gain; Hope wipes the

pa-tience smile on_ pain, Till dy-ing hope re - vives a - gain; Hope wipes the

pa-tience smile on_ pain, Till dy-ing hope re - vives a - gain; Hope wipes the

quasi a tempo

49

tear from sor-row's eye, and faith points up - ward to the_ sky.

tear from sor-row's eye. hmm

tear from sor-row's eye. hmm

tear from sor-row's eye (ah) (ah-ohm)

tear from sor-row's eye (ah) (ah-ohm) hmm

mp+ *p* *a piacere* $\text{♩} = 54$

mp+ *pp*

mp+ *pp*

mp+ *pp* (glide from ah through oh to mm) *p+*

55

p+
hmm

poco

poco *mp*
hmm

poco *p+*

poco
hmm

58

molto rall.

hmm

hmm

p+
hmm

hmm

hmm