

# 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*  
\* hmmm

TENOR 2 *mp+*  
\* hmmm

BASS 1 *mp+* *p* *mp+*  
\* hmmm

BASS 2 *mp+* *p+* *mp+*  
\* hmmm hmmm

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

7

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

*mf* *p+*

*mf* *p+* *portamento* *mp* *mp* *p+*  
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.\_

26 A  $\text{♩} = 64$

*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\_\_

31

*p legato*

oo \_\_\_\_\_

*mf bitterly, non-legato*

2. Is there no kind, no heal - ing art \_\_\_\_\_ To soothe the an - guish

removed for security,

thanks for understanding

35

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

removed for security,  
 thanks for understanding

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

39

*pp*

$\text{♩} = 56$

**B** *molto legato*

*pp*

3. Let gen-tle

*p*

Thy com-forts are not made to die.

*pp*

3. Let gen-tle

*pp*

3. Let gen-tle

*pp*

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*

$\text{♩} = 54$

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

*(glide from ah through oh to mm)*

55

musical score for measures 55-57. The score consists of four staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). It contains a melodic line with notes G5, A5, B5, and C6, marked with *p+* and *hmm*. The second staff is also in treble clef and contains a sustained chord of G5, A5, and B5, marked with *poco*. The third staff is in bass clef and contains a melodic line with notes G4, F4, E4, and D4, marked with *poco* and *mp*. The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains a melodic line with notes G3, F3, E3, and D3, marked with *hmm* and *poco*.

58

**molto rall.**

musical score for measures 58-60. The score consists of four staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). It contains a melodic line with notes G5, A5, B5, and C6, marked with *hmm*. The second staff is also in treble clef and contains a sustained chord of G5, A5, and B5, marked with *hmm*. The third staff is in bass clef and contains a melodic line with notes G4, F4, E4, and D4, marked with *hmm* and *p+*. The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains a melodic line with notes G3, F3, E3, and D3, marked with *hmm*. The tempo marking **molto rall.** is indicated above the first staff.