

to boil the kettle and get some fresh vigor for the last pull. Have you ever, gentle reader, boiled the kettle 'on ten feet of snow? If not, the Lord take me home? I am ready and anxious to go—just waiting for him to call me. Still he does not call. Here I must lie and suffer, and yet I can be of no more use in the world. I won't complain; the Lord doeth all things well; but I simply cannot understand it.

It is all for the best, mother, one of her pious neighbors would reply. You'll understand it some day.

'Yes, it is all for the best, all for the best.'

Yet the query troubled her a little. But the mystery was made clear sometime afterward, and this is the way it happened.

One morning Mr. Freedmore—who was Mrs. Stephan's pastor—was sitting in his study and brooding over the unsatisfactory condition of his church. Mr. Freedmore, it must be said, was disheartened. There was some matters in his parish that were not just as they should have been, and he naturally was a little disposed to look on the dark side; and when he did that, he was apt to complain somewhat and even scold in his pulpit, as some of his members expressed it.

Everybody knows that scolding is the worst thing a minister can do. It is proper at times to rebuke sin in a firm and manly way, but whining and complaining will gradually alienate a pastor's staunchest friends. Well, Mr. Freedmore had been doing some of this scolding in his last three or four sermons, and while he felt dimly that it was only making matters worse, the depressed state of his feelings seemed to make it impossible for him to change his tone. What he needed was a spiritual tonic.

From what source was it to be supplied? Providence always has a way for the escape of the honest man from the toils of temptation.

After Mr. Freedmore had been thinking for a while, he rose and walked to his library shelves to select a book. Perhaps he could find some relief in reading. A volume on comfort for the aged and infirm suggested a new train of thought.

Yes, I had better call on Mrs. Stephans, he said to himself. It has been a long time since I have called on her, and I learned yesterday that she is very ill.

A half hour later he was knocking at the old lady's door. She greeted him cordially, and did not chide him for neglecting her. After a few words had been exchanged, she turned the conversation to her happy spiritual state.

I do not know, Brother Freedmore, why I am kept here so long, she said; but I am sure it is for some good and useful purpose. My will is not as wise as God's will. You remember what Paul says: All things work together for good to them that love God. I know that is true, and am content. Never have I been so happy and resigned as I have been since I have been lying on this sick bed. Jesus has been constantly present with me, as he promised to be with his disciples.

As her talk flowed on her visitor looked at her with glowing eyes, which presently became dim with tears. This suffering saint was teaching him the very lesson in patience and cheerfulness that he needed.

With all my blessings of health and every comfort, I have been discontented, while this mother in Israel has been happy in the midst of the keenest pain and rarest deprivation, he was thinking to himself, as he listened to her cheering speech.

After a brief prayer he rose to go.

Thank you for your cheering and comforting visit, said Mrs. Stephans as she gave him her thin hand.

It is I who should thank you, he replied. You have been my teacher to-day. I have received more benefit than you from this call. Good-by. I shall call again very soon.

A few days later one of Mrs. Stephans' friends came in to see her.

You should have been at church yesterday, grandma, she chirped. Our pastor, Mr. Freedmore, preached a wonderful sermon. It was so cheering and helpful. You know he's been a little despondent of late and has done too much complaining; but yesterday he changed his tone altogether. And, grandma, you can't guess what it was that brought about this very happy change.

No, I can't guess, she replied, but the Lord must have put a brighter spirit into his mind in his own good way, I'm sure.

It was his visit to you the other day that helped him so much, declared the friend. This is what he said at the opening of his sermon. I have listened to some powerful sermons in my life; but none of them has ever affected me so strongly as the one preached by Mother Stephans a few days ago when I made her a pastoral call. She has been sorely afflicted for years, as you know, but she was so patient and resigned and happy that my own gloom was put to shame. If she can be glad and cheerful under such circumstances, all of us can be glad and cheerful. God forgive me for ever giving up to my feelings of dejection.

Then he dropped his voice low, and the congregation was so still that you could have heard a pin drop, when he said: I truly believe that God has been sparing Mother Stephans' life that she might preach me the very sermon I most needed before she went to her reward. Hereafter I am going to cheer and help you, my dear people, and I shall refrain from all murmuring and complaint.

Then you should have heard him preach, grandma. Why, I never heard any thing so heartening in my life. It made one feel that it was worth while to be a Christian; that there was everything to encourage one to serve Christ, whose reward is always with him.

The tears rose in Mother Stephans' faded eyes, and they were tears of joy and thanksgiving.

I am so happy, she whispered. Now I understand why I haven't been called home sooner. God has had some work for me to do. That is the explanation. His ways are always best. All things—yes, all things—work together for good to them that love God.

Only two days later Mother Stephans' call came. She was bidden to come up higher, and she went in triumph.

But the effect of her sermon on patience in suffering will never die. The Rev. Mr. Freedmore kept his pledge to cheer rather than to castigate and it was the beginning of a career of great usefulness for him, and of great prosperity for his church. He has often said of the sainted old lady:

'She, being dead, yet speaketh.'  
—'Presbyterian.'

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### Mission Work in the Downs.

(Friendly Greetings.)

Sometimes in stormy weather three hundred or four hundred vessels, most of which are English, are anchored in the Downs. The crews are found in loneliness and leisure, and their hearts are prepared for a kindly word by the sense of the coming voyage, and by the thought of their departure from the dear old land.

To reach the vessels, which lie from one to three miles distant from the land, the Mission boat is launched. The tide runs hard, and often a strong wind is blowing, and a passing squall blows the crests of the waves into smoke.

The crew of the Mission boat consist of the chaplain, who steers; the coxswain, who has been for twenty-four years in the Mission boat; and the bowman, who makes his boat-hook fast on many a stormy day to the lofty sides and chains of many a vessel.

The crew of the Mission boat usually assemble for prayer before the launch, and, having commended their work and themselves to God, put on oilskins and sou'westers. The boat lies in front near the capstan, by which she is daily heaved up a distance of fifty or sixty yards when she returns from sea. Twenty willing pairs of hands stand by to rush the good boat into the water; the long-expected 'smooth' comes, and she is soon floated.

A regular church service, with the decent formalities usual on board ship, is not always possible in the Downs. Setting up the rigging, trimming a shifted cargo, bending a new topsail, getting an anchor and chain on board, are sometimes imperative calls; and a formal gathering of the crew is therefore impossible on such occasions. But even then much can be done with the watch below or with all hands at dinner hour.

Hymns are sung in the fore-castle. The temperance pledge book is brought out and signed, the opportunity of signing being often welcomed by some weak and despairing slave as a heaven-sent chance of a new and better life. Many a time, after such a scene, has the whole fore-castle 'crowd' joined in prayer to God, and in blessing the messenger of his mercy. Many chances are also thus afforded of saying a word to individuals, which sinks deeper than anything that can be said in a meeting.

We were once on board the 'Kedron,' a north-country barque, homeward bound after a voyage of two years and three months' duration. She had been trading in the East Indies, and was bound to Riga with a cargo of damaged cocoanuts, if that port were free from ice. We had a gathering on deck—not a formal service—and solemn words were said. A hymn was sung, 'I need Thee, precious Jesus.'

Much interest was shown by all on board—indeed, it was with difficulty we avoided accepting presents from the mate as we got over the side; and to this day a keen remembrance of the manly cordiality and gratitude of the crew lives in our memory. The mate and the steward impressed us as godly men who knew and loved the Saviour. The recollection had a new interest when in the 'Standard' of a later date we read the mournful telegram: 'The British barque 'Kedron' has gone on shore at Dome Ness, off Riga. All hands were lost.'

The Bible is sold in twenty-one languages. The sales are, as might be expected, most frequent on board English vessels, and almost invariably lead to interesting conversation, and very often to a service at which all hands muster. Many copies are also sold on board foreign vessels, Russians purchase, and, of course, Germans and Norwegians. Recently an Italian Bible was sold to an Italian captain, who then first in his lifetime opened a Bible. On board the same ship the chaplain read the story of the Philippian jailer to a Greek sailor in his own tongue; the man then heard it for the first time, and for him the same Italian captain purchased a Greek Testament.

\*The Royal National Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen, of which the Labrador Mission is a branch.