

it should be so, receding as others advanced, because they would not be meddled with, and content to do as their forefathers had done before them, should not we, I ask you, cut about as sorry a figure as they, when the outer world pounces upon us at last, and has its laugh at our ante-diluvian ways? Their very mode of living—that veritable living in tents—accounts for much of all this. When a wagon has formed your home for weeks, nay months, and even years in some cases, would not even a one-roomed house seem spacious quarters? If you have not sat upon a chair for all this time, why need you be ashamed to squat? Habit becomes second nature, as we all know. Another habit of these good folks may even have its excuse. In their journeyings on and on, seemingly without aim, but really in search of pastures new, water at times is a rare commodity, and has to be husbanded with care. The barrel slung under the wagon is liable to emptiness. A Dutch family wagon is usually packed full as any beehive, with human bipeds of all sizes and ages, and in every stage of unwashedness. Where bucketsful would not cleanse, what could a thimbleful do? Hence the faith put in the half-filled pudding-basin and the tiny rag, as a means of purification. The economy of it recommends itself to the Dutch mind, whilst to the Dutch body it is all-sufficient. Again, may we not find another excuse for this flaw in these our brothers? The old Dutch Bible supplies the sole literature they need. They take the simple words, each and all, in their barest and most literal sense, without the aid of commentator or note. Frequent mention they find of the old custom of washing the hands and feet as a ceremonial, more than for any other purpose; so, they argue, possibly—at least I fancy it would be like them to do so—that if that sufficed then, why wash more now?

THEIR RELIGION.

"The Boers are a religious people, with views narrow, but clearly defined. Their children are simply taught God's own truths, as in His revealed word. They end, and, I believe, commence, each day by prayer, and their meals are untouched until a blessing has been reverently asked. Their church is the Dutch Reformed Church, and their love and respect for their minister is a marked feature of their characters. They submit with much humility to the recognized authority of their 'Kirk Raad,' or Council, composed of men like themselves, only with a preference given to those who have won a position amongst them by their wealth, superior education, or more marked piety. Matters of business, quarrels, and the breach of any social law is laid before the Raad, and its decision accepted as final.

"The Doppers have seceded from the Reformed Church. I had fancied they were simply a lower class of Boer, not knowing that the difference was mainly a religious one. Their worship is conducted even more distantly than that of the section from which they have separated, singing being excluded as wicked. They adopt a style of dress which of itself is a blow to vanity, and the faintest approach to mirth, even in private life, is treated as a sin.

"Missus would like to see a Nacht-maal?" said John, one day.
"What may that be?" asked I.
"It's when the Dutch come into town, once every three months, to go to church, and take the Sacrament, and get their babies christened, and the girls and boys confirmed, and they buy their goods, and sell their wool, and they visit one another. Oh! there are lots of wagons outspanned in the square then, and the place is full, full!"

"This Nacht-maal is a great institution, and has come of the necessity for occasional social intercourse amongst a people who, living so wide apart in their scattered homesteads, and upon farms so large that it is a day's journey to visit a neighbor,

would otherwise never interchange an idea outside their own family, except when visited at long intervals by a travelling merchant, who, like the Troubadour of old, is sure of a hearty welcome and of being fed upon the fat of the land, so glad are they to have him as a guest. Transactions of every kind are carried on during Nacht-maal, and, as far as a Boer can be jolly, he is jolly then, and so are his servants, and so are his young folks. Who knows but that it might have been at Nacht-maal that our Pieter first saw his Gretchen?"

But the story of the courtship and marriage of Pieter and Gretchen shall be told presently. H. A. B.

The Quiet Hour.

GOD'S TEMPERING FIRE.

When He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.—Job xxiii: 10.

When stern occasion calls for war,
And the trumpets shrill and peal,
Forges and armories ring all day
With the fierce clash of steel.
The blades are heated in the flame,
And cooled in icy flood,
And beaten hard, and beaten well,
To make them firm and pliable,
Their edge and temper good;
Then, tough and sharp with discipline,
They win the fight for fighting men.

When God's occasions call for men,
His chosen souls He takes,
In life's hot fire He tempers them,
With tears He cools and slakes;
With many a heavy, grievous stroke
He beats them to an edge,
And tests, and tries, again, again,
Till the hard will is fused, and pain
Becomes high privilege;
Then, strong, and quickened through and through,
They ready are His work to do.

Like an on-rushing, furious host
The tide of need and sin,
Unless the blades shall tempered be,
They have no chance to win;
God trusts to no untested sword
When He goes forth to war;
Only the souls that, beaten long
On pain's great anvil, have grown strong.
His chosen weapons are,
Ah, souls, on pain's great anvil laid,
Remember this, nor be afraid!
—Susan Coolidge.

Again I write to you as one of those who have been called aside by the Great

Captain, who assigns each soldier his post in the long-continued warfare the Church is waging against evil. Though our business is to submit, instantly and unquestioningly, to the lightest command of the Master we have sworn to serve to the death, still He condescends to call us not "slaves," but "friends"—for a servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth. Though we should not hesitate to obey when we cannot understand, still—in loyalty to our Friend—we should try to understand as well as obey, whenever possible. We should study His ways with others, and look into His heart and mind so that we may be able to see as well as know that His choice of our daily duty is both wise and kind.

Let us look awhile at the great mystery of pain from God's point of view, and see if we cannot take higher ground than passive submission, and learn to thank Him honestly and persistently for any cross He may have called us to endure.

In Susan Coolidge's poem, "Tempered," given above, men are described as weapons which God wishes to use in the great battle, and she shows the importance of the slow and painful "tempering" process. Surely those of us who are ambitious of the high honor of being used by God, will gladly place ourselves unreservedly at His disposal, so that we may become—at any cost—strong and capable. We don't want to snap or bend when we are most needed. We earnestly desire that He may be able to depend on our zeal and loyalty, and may have no occasion to warn us, as He did St. Peter, that we shall fail utterly when the trial comes. And one thing is very certain, there is no royal road to spiritual strength; we can never buy a character ready-made. Though each beautiful grace of soul is God's gift, still we can only make it really ours by hard struggle—even as the Promised Land was a "gift" from God to the Israelites, and yet they had to fight for every inch of it.

One of the beautiful stories of the old mythology describes a young man who had set his heart on destroying a terrible three-headed monster that was doing awful mischief in the country. But he was well aware that to attack this monster, just as he was, would do no good. Its fiery breath would destroy him, and even if he should succeed in cutting off one of its heads, he would instantly fall a victim to the others. If only he could gain possession of a marvellous winged horse, there would be a real hope of victory. And so he waited beside the fountain where the flying horse sometimes came to drink, waited—patiently or impatiently—though often his eager, youthful zeal urged him to stop this apparently idle waiting, fling prudence to

the winds and dash after the enemy. But he controlled his impatience, and waited until the horse was his, and then he was an adversary fit to grapple with his grim adversary. The story is a parable. We, none of us, will gain anything by dashing into the battle before God has equipped us for the fight. And, as for this question of pain—pain of body, or heart, or spirit—when God calls us to endure it, He is forewarning us that the time will come when we shall stand in urgent need of the stored-up strength which only the endurance of pain can give us. And "endurance," if it is to be really valuable, does not mean a stoical submission to the inevitable. If we "get through" our hours of suffering in that foolish fashion, we shall be throwing away a rich jewel which God has hidden in a rough casket. Only by taking the pain, moment by moment, from our dear Master's hand, and thanking Him for the gifts of patience, courage, tenderness, sympathy and trust which He offers us through it, can we make the most of the opportunity which pain offers. We want to grow strong, we want to pour out our lives in rich service—then let us be glad of pain and not waste this glorious opportunity.

May I not rejoice that God has given me pain to bear just now, so that I may have a new message to tell out to you? And we always touch the lives of others so closely that no one can be called to endure pain solely for his own perfecting. When God puts a soul into the furnace, that it may come forth purified and tempered, He intends to enrich the world. When a soul endures the fire with high courage and glad submission, he can do more good than a thousand sermons. Beauty and attractiveness of spirit, joy of soul and gladness of face are great weapons whereby any of us may extend Christ's kingdom on earth. We look and wonder, and are inspired to imitate. Think how our Leader's unselfish thoughtfulness for others in the midst of His own agony won the soul of the dying thief, though no word of exhortation came from those parched lips. How that self-forgetful Example puts us to shame! Except the one appeal for sympathy and help which proved Him to be no stoic, that cry, "I thirst!" which tells us that it is right to drop our pride of independence when we really need the kindly ministrations of others; except that one cry which showed the Divine Sufferer to be near of kin to us—every word showed that He was thinking of people about Him or of God.

How that Example, as I say, puts us to shame! Do not our words show that we are thinking almost entirely about ourselves and our own pain?



"Waiting for the Cows."