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Northern Messenger

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VOLUME XLII. No. 1

MONTREAL, JANUARY 4, 1907.

40 Cts. Per An. Post-Paid

In Prison for Twelve Years.

Some of you are familiar with the story of John Bunyan. Others of you, perhaps, do not know that that part of the Pilgrim's Progress which he calls 'the Valley of the Shadow of Death' was a part he lived in for several years. He lived in the gloom and terrors of that awful state. After he became a preacher he was overwhelmed with thoughts as to his future, tempted to believe that he had sinned away his day of grace. Satan

where he spent so many weary days and nights, and the magistrate asked him, 'If we let you go will you cease to preach?' 'If you send me back to jail,' he replied, 'I will stop there until the moss grows on my eyebrows, and when I get out I will preach.'

Yet this was a time of great darkness and misery, but he felt the call to preach, and he tells us how there came upon him this terrible trial. The enemy said, 'We will hang thee, we will stop thy preaching with the rope,' and he said, 'I can fancy myself on the

my neck and myself about to jump into eternity, and I heard Jesus Christ saying "Come unto Me;" "him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out."

'And I said, "Lord, when I jump into eternity I will jump towards Thee; if Thou dost catch me, well; but whether Thou dost catch me or not, I will jump towards Thee."

That broke the snare, and his heart was made happy in his God. And I say to you, Come to God, come to Him, and I dare stake my crown that He receives you, and blesses you, and makes you glad and ready to dance for joy.

Must it not have seemed to John Bunyan that everything was against him? For twelve weary years he was imprisoned in Bedford Gaol. With his burning passion for souls, with his longing to preach the Gospel of the glory of the Blessed God, what a puzzle this strange providence must have been to him!

The door of the prison cell is preserved at Bunyan's Meeting as a memorial of this historic event. The chapel is a place of pilgrimage for travellers of all lands.

How the people longed to hear Bunyan's rousing words! How they hungered for the Bread of Life that he could break unto them!

But he was in bonds for Christ's sake. He could endure hardness as a good soldier of the Cross.

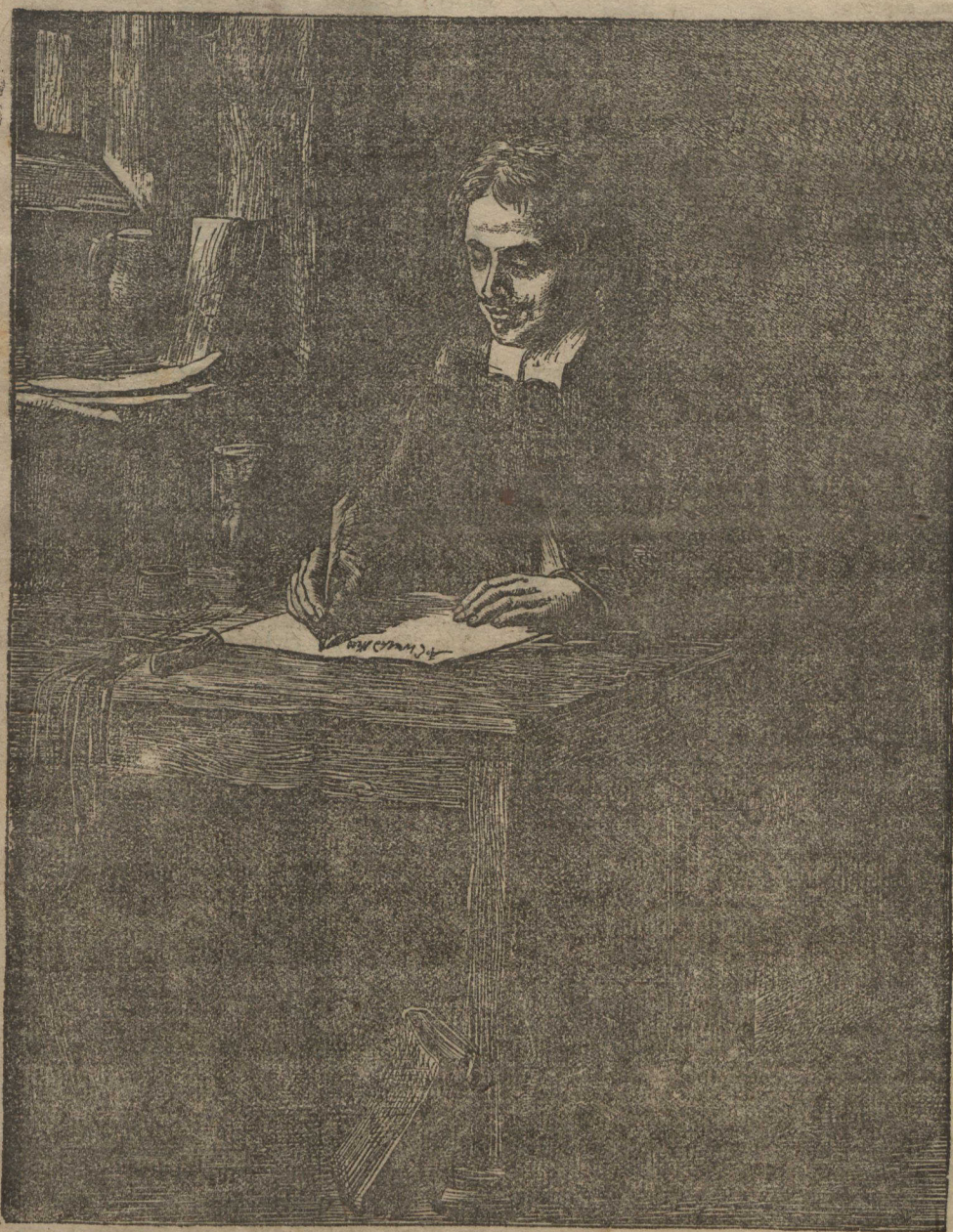
Then came the wonderful dream! No one will deny that it was a Divine revelation. What a radiancy of inspiration must have filled the dungeon as the dream passed before the illustrious prisoner! He was not at liberty to preach. Restraint fettered his lips—but the dreamer could write the 'Pilgrim's Progress.' 'He preserved the dream.' It did not fade away with the day-dawn. Almost as a pastime page after page of the immortal book was penned. So that now, as a result of that prison silence, he is preaching to millions by the printed page, instead of to thousands, and his message will live for centuries instead of for years.

We see the silver lining to the dark cloud, but to Bunyan it was a very different thing. His acute experience was a blessing in disguise for all sorts and conditions of men. Out of the stress and strain of that hard lot came the splendid allegory; but the writer had to endure the cross for those twelve burdensome years.

I am reminded of Mrs. Browning's choice epigram:—

'The inner side of every cloud
Is bright and shining;
I therefore turn my clouds about,
And always wear them inside out,
To show the lining.'

Yes! the 'lining' of the cloud 'shining' on the pilgrim's journey from the City of Destruction to the City of God has cheered multitudes, and will encourage multitudes more. Side by side with the Bible, the great dreamer's book is found in countless homes to-day.



JOHN BUNYAN WRITING THE 'PILGRIM'S PROGRESS.'

whispered to him, 'Behold, thou art not one of the elect, and thou art sure to perish.' So he said, 'I will preach like one in chains.'

Nobody could stop him preaching. Like another John the Baptist, wherever he went he made sinners to tremble as he spoke to them of the certainty of punishment if they failed to repent, and all the time he was being persecuted, and there were times when they threatened to put him to death. You will remember that when once they had brought him out of prison, that miserable, damp hole

gallows—that old primitive gallows, two upright posts and one across, and a rope hanging down with a noose at the end, and two ladders, one up which the culprit went, and one up which the executioner went. He could see that, and he said, 'I felt that rope around my neck.'

Satan said, 'When thou jumpest into eternity, I shall have thee,' and he said, 'Just then, when Satan was telling me I was such a fool to go on preaching; and that he would have me in the end, I fancied the rope round