

He had lain there in suffering month after month, year after year, till every joint was stiff, and every touch gave him pain. He had become so deaf that his loving, patient mother had to shout into his ear when she asked him a question.

Kind neighbours, who looked in to try and amuse him, went away with sad hearts, feeling that there was nothing they could now do to help him on this earth.

Tom had been to many hospitals, but no doctors could cure or help him, he only grew worse day by day. Most piteous was it to think of possibly a long life still before him, utterly helpless, nothing to do, but alas! plenty to suffer. Think of what that means. At last his friends got into the way of saying, 'It is of little use to go and see him, for he cannot hear a word we say.'

Others persevered in their kind visits, and sometimes played at quiet games with him that whiled away a few suffering hours.

At one time Tom could colour outlined texts, but at last his fingers were unable to hold the brush; he could then do nothing, only endure, and this he did with patience.

Some wondered why a loving Father should leave this young man to suffer so long, whilst other men, happy and useful, were called away. I said so one day to a good clergyman, whom I was conducting to his house. His answer was, 'We do not know what deep work God may be doing in his soul.'

That was in January; six months later he was much worse; pain had become almost torture. Yet still he lay patient and good, so far as our eyes could see. But God sees deep. He sees the very root of our sins. And He loves us so much that He will purge them thoroughly away by the power of suffering, as well as by the love which gave itself to wash away our sins.

So Tom lay on that bed of pain for three months more, and it was when we should have thought he could bear no more, that one day he burst out into singing praises and hymns, and kept repeating, 'I am so happy; my pains are nothing to me.'

Wonderful indeed!

About that time I received a letter, which

I will quote: 'I want to tell you about poor Tom. I went to see him a few days ago, and was quite touched by the poor fellow. He lies there in an awful state, bodily, but as happy in mind as possible, in constant communion with God. His joy surpasses all earthly happiness. He takes hardly any food, only grapes and eggs. I hope he cannot last much longer. He said, "You will tell the lady, won't you? I want everyone to know how good God is, and how happy I am."'

A few days later I got another letter, saying, 'Tom is much changed, but looks very peaceful, and says over and over again, "I am quite happy, for the Lord is with me." He fears not death, but waits patiently for the blessed call.'

Ten days later he was still alive. He asked for the Holy Communion for the last time.

'Poor fellow, nothing can be more terrible than his condition; he does not even take the milk and eggs now, but is still in the same happy state of mind.'

Just then a young man, but little older than himself, died after three days' illness.

What a contrast! When would poor Tom be taken?

The last food he took was the Blessed Body and Blood of our Lord in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

I saw him *eight days after that*. Some flowers were standing by his bed. He had asked for them from the home of one who had been very kind to him, in order to be ready to put into his coffin.

He had told his mother he should go when they "'home-chime" for the young man just dead.' They call it 'home-chiming' in our parts when the passing bell rings.

And that day Tom's words came true. He too went home.

His last words to me were of his Lord. 'I cannot see Him, but He is always there. He helps me to bear my pains.' He spoke to every visitor of this comforting Friend. To some he said, 'You don't know what He is; go to Him now.'

Yes, Tom had 'found the Lord,' and that was why his joy surpassed all earthly joy.