

THE HOUR OF PAIN.

It is a man's instinct to strive for happiness. But the greater a human soul becomes, the more inevitably it puts this instinct aside, and strives toward ends which may bring, instead, suffering and even martyrdom. From seeking joy to rejoicing in tribulation—that transformation of character and purpose lies in this change of goal! Thinkers who look on this transforming ideal find in comparison something patently poor and selfish in the instinct that craves personal joy and avoids personal pain; and the desire for happiness, accordingly, has long ceased to be ranked among the high human motives.

It is man's instinct, also, to shrink from pain. But until man knows the final meaning of life—which so far remains mysterious to the wisest—he cannot know the final meaning of pain. And in proportion as we recognize suffering as a great, mysterious, ever-acting factor of life, which holds mighty lessons if we can but learn them, in that proportion pain becomes education, and not mere blind anguish. The crisis, the agony, changes from a hideous blank wall against which we beat and rave in vain, to a path which, difficult though it be for our bleeding and exhausted feet, climbs toward the light.

In the gathering shadows of His cross, Christ voiced problem and answer for us in that deep saying: "Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour. But for this came I unto this hour." For some cause every child of God comes to the hour of crisis and anguish. Christ knew the meaning of His cross; and He was sinless. We do not always know the meaning of ours; and we have not always been obedient or innocent. Yet His words show us the way. Shall we cry: "Father, save us from this hour," when it is in the purposes of God that we shall meet it?

To be saved, at all costs, from the overshadowing hour of anguish—who would ask that who fully trusts the Father of all spirits, and who deeply believes that God does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men? Rather should the soul humbly but unflinchingly enter the gate of trial, say, "For some cause ordained of God, came I unto this hour." To escape the agony we dread might be to lose more than we understand, and to substitute weakness and willfulness for the strength to carry out God's will, through darkness and loneliness and pain, to the divinely appointed end. The natural shrinking from suffering is not cowardly; but cowardice clutches us when we refuse to accept and face our pain, and to search out its secret of purification, of atonement, of sacrifice, of growth or of power. To feel that sorrow is meaningless, and to think we can escape it to advantage is to make God's government of the world meaningless, since pain holds so large a place in it. Not to seek to be saved from the hour of anguish, but to find its hidden lesson for our souls and to work it out in our pain and weakness, with a loyal determination not to lose an iota of its meaning—there lies the perfect way that leads to the heights. And in the end blessed are those that mourn, for they shall be comforted. God is love. Pain has love behind it, shining through the darkest veil; and when, the lesson learned, that veil is lifted, we shall rejoice that we were counted worthy to suffer.—Priscilla Leonard to The Interior.

It is hard for one who is borne in the lap of luxury to become meek and lowly in spirit. The riches which make men humble are not the gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh which are laid at the feet of Jesus, but "the gold tried in the fire." The inner treasury of the soul must hold the Pearl of great price.

To sell one's birthright for a mess of pottage is bad; to sell one's soul for a glass of beer is worse.

A PRAYER.

O Lord of grace and glory, hear us as we pray that Thy grace may be for us all-sufficient indeed to help in every hour of need, and may Thy glory be more revealed to us in the moving of the things of this world steadily toward a recognition of Thy presence, Thy power and Thy righteous claim. Hasten the day when men may strive more earnestly to be right than to be rich; more earnestly to be good than to be great; more earnestly to be fair than famous; more earnestly to be sincere than to be successful. Drive the influences that corrupt and debase to the dens of darkness, and destroy them, O our God. And may Thy gracious name be glorified. Amen.

A SOLEMN THOUGHT.

The one "sweetly solemn thought" that came to Phoebe Cary, and of which she sang so sweetly in her little poem "Nearer Home" was this:

"I am nearer home to-day
Than I have ever been before."

She was nearer her Father's house, nearer the great white throne and the crystal sea; nearer the bound of life where she would lay down her burdens, nearer the crown;

"But lying darkly between,
Winding down through the night,
Is the silent, unknown stream,
That leads at last to the light."

Realize it or not, it is true of us all that each day brings us one day nearer the end of life and nearer the wonderful realities of the life to come. At each week's end we draw our pay and go to our homes with the reward of our labor in our hands. We are also one week nearer the crystal sea, the great white throne.

"Closer and closer my steps
Come to the dread abyss,
Closer death to my lips
Presses the awful chrysm."

So swiftly pass the years that we fail to realize that the scenery of life is changing, that our hair is turning gray, that the boys and girls of a few years ago are now the fathers and the mothers, that the lads who used to coast in the hills are now preaching the word of God, or bearing the sacred emblems to his covenanting people.

"Oh, if my mortal feet
Have almost gained the brink—
If I be nearer home
Even to-day than I think!
"Father, perfect my trust;
Let my spirit feel in death,
That her feet are firmly set
On the rock of a living faith."

LO! IT IS NIGH THEE.

The surprise of life always comes in finding how we have missed the things that have lain nearest to us; how we have gone far away to seek that which was close by our side all the time. Men who live best and longest are apt to come, as the result of all their living, to the conviction that life is not only richer but simpler than it seemed to them at first. Men go to vast labor seeking after peace and happiness. It seems to them as if it were far away from them, as if they must go through vast and strange regions to get it. They must pile up wealth, they must see every possible danger of mishap guarded against, before they can have peace. Upon how many old men has it come with a strange surprise that peace could come to rich or poor only with contentment, and that they might as well have been content at the very beginning as at the very end of life! They have made a long journey for their treasure, and when at last they stoop to pick it up, lo! it is shining close beside the footprint which they left when they set out to travel in a circle.—Phillips Brooks.

COMMUNION WITH CHRIST.

Some Bible Hints.

If we are in lack of comfort, do not know the Comforter. The test of religion is joy (v. 16).

It is folly to dream of knowing Christ till we are ready to be known of Him. He will give Himself to us when we give ourselves to Him. (v. 20).

Christ does not say, "Obey me, love me," but, "If you love me, you will obey me" (v. 21).

If we have doubts, it is because we have not the Spirit: the two cannot live together (v. 26).

Suggestive Thoughts.

Communion with Christ means union with His work, His people, and His person.

There can be no acquaintance with Christ, any more than with a human friend, without the spending of time with Christ.

The more regular we are in our communion with Christ, the more we shall commune with Him also at irregular times.

The noble phrase, "Practise the presence of God," implies the truth that perfect communion comes only after much communion.

A Few Illustrations.

God is here and it is our fault if we do not perceive Him just as the Roentgen rays have always been in existence though men did not see them.

The problem of wireless telegraphy was solved when that marvellously delicate receiver was invented; but God's heart is instantly responsive to the least impulse from earth.

Men spoil a conversation when they insist on monologues. There is no communion with God unless we will listen as well as speak.

Conversation between two friends is based on sympathy and in its turn increases sympathy. It is so with communion with God.

To Think About.

Do I spend enough time in prayer?
Do I allow worthy thoughts to vitalize my prayers?
Is Christ's presence real to me when I pray?

A Cluster of Quotations.

Master, speak! and make me ready,
When Thy voice is truly heard,
With obedience glad and steady
Still to follow every word.
—Frances Ridley Havergal.
O Jesus Christ, grow Thou in me,
And all things else recede.
—J. C. Lavater.
When prayer delights the least, then learn to say,
Soul, now is greatest need that thou should'st pray.—Trench.
Silent to Jesus? Think! Have you nothing to ask Him for? Nothing to praise Him for? Nothing to confess?—Anna Shipton.

DAILY READINGS

M., Oct. 29.—Early communion with God. Gen. 3:8-15.
T., Oct. 30.—Abraham's communion. Gen. 18:1-19:33.
W., Oct. 31.—Moses communes with God. Ex. 33:9-23.
Th., Nov. 1.—David and God. Ps. 149:2-3.
F., Nov. 2.—Communion through Christ. 1 John 1:1-7.
S., Nov. 3.—For eternity. Rev. 3:15, 20-22.
S., Nov. 4.—Togbe—The Blessedness of communion with Christ. John 14: 15-26. (Consecration meeting).

To despise the grace of God is to forfeit his mercy. "None of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper." It is a solemn thing to turn away from the grace of the Son of God.