

Pastor and People.

NOT UNCOMFORTLESS.

The night approached, yet the way before us
Is wild, and long, and fears our heart oppress,
A tender voice calls from the darkness o'er us,
"I will not leave you comfortless."

The night grows darker and around us ringing
We hear the sounds of weakness and distress,
Yet over all is still the sweet voice singing,
"I will not leave you comfortless."

The wind grows bitter and the rain is falling,
O Christ! is this the path of holiness?
Bear up! bear on! the heavenly voice is calling
"I will not leave you comfortless."

"This thorny way and weary, I before you
With feet unsaddled, for your sake did press,
The Father's watchful eye is ever o'er you,
Nor wilt I leave you comfortless."

Thus ever sweetly with the tumult blending,
This benediction as a soft caress,
Is through the heavy cloud from heaven descend-
ing,
"I will not leave you comfortless."

Ah might we, *patient Lord*, learn Thy endurance,
To know Thy peace and win Thy rest,
O weary hearts still wait the dear assurance
Thou wilt not leave us comfortless.

—Selected.

THE GOSPEL IN LARGE CAPITALS.—II.

DR. PATON'S STORY OF A CHRISTIAN ADVENTURE.

BY FIDELIS.

John Paton did not go out to the New Hebrides alone. He took with him a young wife, whose heart was as devoted as his own to the work they had jointly undertaken, and whose affection and society were to gladden his exile, for, alas! little more than one short year. At Aneityum they were received by the heroic pioneer missionary, Dr. Geddie, under whose labours the people of the island had, from heathen cannibals, become a band of simple-minded Christians, and who had now a little group of fellow missionaries about him. Tanna, an island where the people were still heathens and cannibals, was assigned to Mr. and Mrs. Paton, as well as another missionary and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Matheson, while a third, Mr. Copeland, was to assist both at their respective stations as occasion might require.

Accompanied by Dr. Inglis and some energetic Aneityumese converts, the new missionaries went to prepare houses, etc., at Tanna, leaving their wives, in the meantime, at Aneityum. At his station, Port Resolution, the house Mr. Paton and his wife were to occupy, built of wood, plastered with ground coral, and thatched with sugar-cane leaf, was rapidly advanced, but unfortunately the site, too close to the shore and exposed to miasma, turned out to be a very unhealthy one. The natives they found to be in a very unsettled and excited state, and, indeed, they continued so during the whole four years of Dr. Paton's residence. The chiefs were willing to accept any material benefits they could derive from the presence of missionaries; but they were not at all disposed to pledge themselves for their protection, nor would their pledges have been much to be depended on if they had. "No heathen there," says Dr. Paton, "could be trusted one step beyond what appeared to be his own self-interest for the nonce; and nothing conceivable was too base or too cruel to be done, if only it served his turn. The depths of Satan, outlined in the first chapter of the Romans, were uncovered there before our eyes in the daily life of the people, without veil and without excuse."

The feelings inspired in Dr. Paton by his first experiences of these natives "in their paints and nakedness and misery," as recorded by himself, closely resemble those described by Pere Beaud as awakened by the sights of the wretched savages at Tadoussac—deep compassion, almost a despair of their conversion, followed by the hopeful faith in the all-powerful grace of God to do what with man seemed indeed impossible. The

Scottish missionary had, however, the inspiring example of Dr. Geddie's wonderful success in Aneityum to cheer him on. But Tanna was not to be a second Aneityum, and the record of his four years there is one of endless sufferings, discouragements, alarms, and hairbreadth escapes. At times it seemed as if everything was against the sorely tried but still dauntless missionary. He had to battle with the childish fickleness of even the friendly natives, always oscillating between a shallow kindness, responding to his loving patience, and the savage thirst for blood which ever and anon rose to the surface. He had to contend with the unfavorable effects of climatic catastrophes sure to be attributed to the presence of the missionary and his strange worship, and, worst of all, with the worse than heathen sandal-wood traders, who seemed inspired with a diabolical ingenuity in their vile machinations to get rid of the missionaries, who seemed to them as did the Apostles to the heathen Asiatics, hindrances to their insatiable cupidity. The first native conflict, witnessed while the missionaries' house was being built, is graphically described: "The discharge of muskets in the adjoining bush, and the horrid yells of the savages, soon informed us that they were engaged in deadly fights. Excitement and terror were on every countenance; armed men rushed about in every direction, with feathers in their twisted hair, with faces painted red, black, and white, and some, one cheek black, the other red; others, the brow white, the chin blue, in fact, any color and on any part—the more grotesque and savage-looking the higher the art. After the battle their Aneityumese boy who had gone for water, came back with the following report:

"Missi, this is a dark land. The people of this land do dark works. At the boiling spring they have cooked and feasted upon the slain. They have washed the blood into the stream, they have bathed there till all the waters are red. I cannot get water to make your tea."

The killing and eating of each other was to this lad, as Dr. Paton remarks, "a thing scarcely to be noticed; but it was horrible they should spoil the water! I, if trained like him, would probably have felt like him." Then came the experience of the strangling of widows, common there as it had been in Aneityum. Amid such surroundings the mission house at Port Resolution was built, and in November 1858 Mr. and Mrs. Paton, accompanied by Mr. Copeland, were safely landed there with their goods, while the other missionaries for the island, Mr. and Mrs. Matheson, went to settle on the south side, at a considerable distance. Dr. Paton had now full opportunity of estimating the depth of superstition and degradation in which the natives were sunk, worshipping almost every natural object, and having "sacred men" for sorcerers, very like the "medicine men" of the North American Indians who, of course, proved one of the greatest stumbling blocks in the missionaries' way, and to whose influence they owed many a misfortune and defeat. Dr. Paton began to learn their language in the practical manner which all missionaries have to adopt towards savage tongues. He soon found out the names for all the material objects about him; and hit on at least one gleam of sunshine and hope amid the darkness. "The Tannese called Heaven by the name of Aneai, and we afterwards discovered that this was the name of the highest and most beautifully situated village on the island. Their best bit of earth was to them the symbol and type of Heaven. The fact that they had an Aneai or promised land opened their minds naturally to our idea of the promised land of the future, the Aneai of the Gospel hope and faith." Their desire, too, to know the greater and more powerful gods, and to have them on their side, led them to listen eagerly to the missionaries' teachings of the God of the Bible. But when it became clear to them that the service of this God demanded the sacrifice of their superstitious observances, and their sinful customs, their savage hearts rose in

utter revolt, and too often in bloodthirsty hatred against the teachers of the unwelcome doctrine.

For the first three months of his residence on the island, Dr. Paton had the solace and help of his young wife as his companion and helper. But early in March the crowning joy of the birth of a son was quickly followed by the death of the young mother and her babe; and the bereaved missionary was left in the darkness of crushed hopes and a desolated home to work alone and unaided, beside the double grave. Too late he realized that the site chosen for their house had been an unhealthy one, exposed to damp and miasmatic winds, and even on himself, stunned by his irreparable loss, the weakening influences of malarial fever told severely. But still he toiled on, amid the mean, forbidding savages, making of the white coral-covered grave a sacred shrine at which he prayed for the salvation of the poor heathen around him. Missionary annals present few pictures more touching in heavenly pathos.

Had Mrs. Paton lived, she would undoubtedly have exercised a strong influence over the native women whom she had already begun to teach. Her valuable help was now removed from the solitary worker, whose sympathizing brethren would have persuaded him to leave for a time the scene of his sorrow. A pleasant touch of Christian fellow-feeling is that of the visit of good Bishop Selwyn and the young Coleridge Patteson, the future missionary martyr, when the venerable Bishop stood with his bereaved brother beside the grave in which were buried the hope and sweetness of his life; and, amid sobs and tears and broken prayer, laid his hands on the young missionary's head in paternal benediction. "The virtue of that kind of Episcopal consecration I did and do most warmly appreciate," writes Dr. Paton in recording the touching incident. "They urged me, by many appeals, to take a trip with them round the islands, as my life was daily in great danger from the savages. They generously offered to convey me direct to Aneityum or wherever I wanted to go, as I greatly need rest and change." But he felt that it was his duty to remain at his post, and to bear his burden of sorrow and physical weakness in the strength which the sense of his Lord's presence could give.

TO A BUSINESS MAN.

MY DEAR SIR,—Yesterday was the Sabbath, and after being once in church, you made a call, and spent the evening with your wife and family, one or two friends joining. There are so many engagements for town-folk nowadays that if it were not for Sunday evening you and your children would hardly know each other well enough to bow when you meet; you would scarcely ever sit an hour in your own parlour. I was going to say "a quiet hour," but something checked the words. These hours are not so quiet as they should be. You remember the time when, full and occupied as the Sabbaths were, they had always this distinction, that they were days of peace, of what the French finely call "recollection." Now they have lost that character. You suppose it to be a part of the inevitable loss of life as you pass middle age. You are getting old, you say, and Sunday, like other things, is not what it used to be. It is part of the lost Bower which the poet lamented and so many lament after her.

"I have lost—oh many a pleasure,
Many a hope and many a power—
Stodious health and merry leisure;
The first dew on the first flower!
But the first of all my losses was the losing of the bower."

And for you, it seems, something is gone from church and Sabbath, never to be recovered. The world has changed: you suppose you must change with it. The young people rule now, and they do not keep Sabbath as it was kept in your father's house when you were a lad. You miss the old-fashioned calm, the dawdle over "a good

book," the avoidance of secular topics. Nothing is avoided on Sundays now, unless it be respect for ministers and sermons; you find yourself wishing sometimes that you had the courage, or that the spirit of the age would permit you to be such a Puritan as your father was.

Well, for my part, I believe many of our losses are just our cowardices. The cruellest thing life does to us is to make us "falter where we firmly trod," to make us afraid of this and that. It may be necessary, for practical purposes; it may be useful, often; but it is just a cooling down of energy, and as it grows it means decay. We live while we purpose and plan, while we prevail over the chaos or inertia of the world. Your father the Puritan accepted a view of life, marched forward according to it, died anticipating his reward. You are for ever making compromises all round, and your moments of assurance are few and far between. This matter of "Sunday observance" is a test one; the whole comes to a point here, so the more straightly and frankly we look at it the better.

Among the literary men who were young yesterday and can hardly be considered very old fogies yet, there is one who is certainly no puritan, nor always courteous to the name, but his intellectual clearness and courage, his entire freedom from the priggish element, bring him very near, sometimes, to the view-point of puritanism, and what he writes can never for a moment be suspected of cant. So when Mr. Jerome, in *To-Day*, preaches on the folly of making Sunday a day of racket instead of rest, one feels that church members are being rung up to their duty. Mr. Jerome speaks of physical exertion, but there are other "bykings" which are just as demoralising. You and I have occasionally spent a Sunday with people whose tongues left one bruised and sick, they were so secular, so restless. Whatever our religion is to be, it must not cease to be a message of peace, it must not cease to commune with God and be still. For yourself, I know that the Sabbath being what it is in your household you do find it a weekly bath for the mind. This very Monday morning you have arisen like a giant—I mean a Glasgow merchant—refreshed; you have gone in to the warehouse with a sort of eagerness for the beneficent burden of daily toil, a renewed wish to prosper honestly and to be a good master. Tell me now, do you ever feel so much interested in your dependants on Saturday night as you do on Monday morning? Well then, what will happen if we let the tide of the mundane increase upon us, if we give up "recollection," if we allow Sunday to be a noisy "disjaskit" addition to an unsettled week? Let us have the courage to claim what God gives us—a Sabbath day made holy, that is complete and satisfying, a day of grace. The ministers will then preach better, and the week will run better, and we shall begin to think that all fair things may be recovered yet.—Yours, with best wishes.

—Deas Cromarty, in the *British Weekly*.

I have seen a little plant beneath an oak tree sheltered from the storm and wind and rain, and it felt pleased and happy to be so screened; but I have seen the woodman come with his axe and fell the oak, and the little plant has trembled with fear because its protection was removed. "Alas! for me," it said, "the hot sun will scorch me, the driving rain will drown me, and the fierce wind will tear me up by the roots." But, instead of these dreadful results, the shelter being removed, the plant has breathed freer air, drunk more of the dews of heaven, received more of the light of the sun, and it has sprung up and borne flowers which else had never bloomed, and seeds that never else had sown themselves in the soil. Be glad when God thus visits thee, when he takes away these overshadowing but dwarfing comforts, to make thee have a clear way between thee and heaven, so that gifts might come more plentifully to thee.—Rev. C. H. Spurgeon.