

so there are diseases of the soul that can be healed only by the discipline of suffering; the heavenly Physician, who "giveth medicine to heal their sickness," makes no mistakes. Affliction is curative; like the knife in the surgeon's hand, it wounds to heal. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn Thy statutes." In the wearisome days and nights of suffering, the Christian calls his own ways to remembrance. Undetected sins and shortcomings, self-deceivings and half-unconscious dalliance with pleasant evils, neglect of known duties, and spiritual somnambulism in dangerous places, natural gifts that masqueraded as heavenly graces, and indolence that folded away its talents—like some deadly secret written with invisible ink they have been inscribed on the pages of the soul, unseen by human eye, but when the acids of affliction touch the page the hideous secret comes into open vision, and the soul sees itself as God sees it. It is the sharp pain, telling of hideous disease, that drives the patient to seek the doctor's care; so the Christian, when suffering reveals to him the plague-spots on his soul, flies to the Good Physician, and soon is able to exclaim, "Bless the Lord, oh my soul, Who healeth all thy diseases." The bitterness of affliction is a tonic. It is not in the lap of luxury that soldiers are trained; the racers and wrestlers in the ring at Olympia did not win their laurels without pain; our noblest workers and thinkers are not those who live an easy, pleasant life.

In the battle against evil, in the race of life, Christ's soldiers and wrestlers are trained through suffering, and braced by pain. What sick man ever grew strong on sugared draughts? Ease, luxury, a life that has all the hard corners padded, these are not the things that bring out the best that is in a man. As with the physical and moral parts of our nature, so with the spiritual. When David was at ease in Jerusalem he weakly fell, but in adversity he was strong to resist evil. "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept Thy word," is not the confession of the Psalmist alone. How many souls have seen behind the veil of sorrow the shining face of an angel from heaven strengthening them! Is there not more than a suggestion of this idea in the cheery words of St. Paul addressed to the afflicted: "Wherefore lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees?" There is a height of spiritual joy to be attained by the Christian through suffering, to which no ladder but that of pain can reach. "To know the fellowship of His suffering." Of earthly happiness the Saviour tasted little, but there is not a depth nor shoal of sorrow that he has not sounded, and when He calls His own to cross that sea, "He goeth before them." We can only touch on this thought, leaving each to think it out for himself. Too weak to pray, too suffering to think, let the soul cling to the Man of Sorrows, and in that mysterious "fellowship," then only to be realized, will be felt that secret sustaining joy which "B.M." pictures in one of her poems—"Only heaven itself is sweeter than to walk with Him upon the sea of sorrow."

But affliction has a wider range. Suffering has a power, and pain a ministry, far outside the little circle of the sufferer's own personality. The soul that thinks only of its own cure, its own strengthening, its own hidden fellowship, will grow morbid, and lose much of its pain-bought good. Fanny Bickersteth, in the midst of a very furnace-fire of agony, was yet a missionary to all around. Little Ernest von Willick, lying on his bed of sickness, never dreamt that his trustful words—

When the Lord me sorrow sends,  
Let me bear it patiently—

would have power to soothe an emperor's heart. A clergyman once declared that he believed more good to have been wrought in his parish by the prayers of those imprisoned in sick rooms, who, in their time of fellowship hand in hand with Christ, had spoken to the Most High, than by all the labors of a well-trained band of workers. Who can sympathize like one who has endured the same loss? Who can comfort like one who has sorrowed with the same sorrow? Who can intercede like one who has borne the same burden? "What I tell you in darkness that speak ye in light." Those whom God has "trusted with pain" have a glorious priesthood—to minister to hearts distressed—to touch with tender hand the spirit's wounds. Let those whose lips have tasted the water of Marah remember that they have a service to offer which none save they can render, a ministry for which God Himself has ordained them. If we consider our Lord's life we see that that which has influenced men most was not His doing, but His suffering. His life was lovely and helpful, but the power of it was in his agony and death. So in the day when the Books are opened it will be found, we doubt not, that many of the greatest victories of the Christian Church have been won by wounded soldiers, many of her grandest enterprises carried through not by the workers' zeal, but by the folded trembling hands of unknown sufferers; and heads that have long meekly bowed beneath a crown of thorns shall at last be diademed with gems.

## THOUGHTS BY THE WAY.

### THE MARRIAGE TIE.

#### *The Voice of the Church.*

"Till death us part"—  
So speaks the heart  
When each to each repeats the words of doom.  
Through blessing and through curse,  
For better and for worse,  
We will be one till that dread hour shall come.

Life with its myriad grasp  
Our yearning souls shall clasp,  
By ceaseless love and still expectant wonder,  
In bonds that shall endure,  
Indissolubly sure,  
Till God in death shall part our paths asunder.

Till death us join—  
O voice yet more Divine  
That to the broken heart breathes hopes sublime;  
Through lonely hours,  
And shattered powers,  
We still are one despite of age or time.

Death with his healing hand  
Shall once more knit the ban  
Which needs but that one link which none may sever,  
Till through the only good,  
Heard, felt, and understood,  
Our life in God shall make us one for ever.

Into many a life comes a period of comparative inaction, when the ordinary interest seem ended or their direction altered. Illness or sorrow may withdraw one for a time from the world hitherto familiar. Sometimes it is the pressure of unaccustomed duties that keeps the hands busy while the thoughts have strange leisure. Sometimes the mother of little children feels as if she were losing the intellectual growth that comes from study and close contact with living outside interests, even when the home seclusion and tender duties are most dear. It is sometimes hard to believe it at the time; but in later years we often see that from such periods, when all we could do was to

"Lie and wait in God's great hand,  
A patient bit of fallow land,"

we draw the strength that was to suffice for the coming struggle or the appreciation that could recognize a victory.

### The Church and Sociological Science

Prof. Graham Taylor, of Chicago Theological Seminary, has a thoughtful article in *The Advance*, of Chicago, discussing the question as to what the Church may expect from the present sociological movement. Professor Taylor is a recognized authority in sociology, and his views on this important question are therefore worthy of attention. He begins by stating some of the things which the sociological movement stands for when considered in relation to the Church. It stands, he says, for the movement of the common mind to arrive at a clearer knowledge of the complex relation of man to man in modern society; the movement of the common heart to realize the undying truth of social justice and human brotherhood; the movement of the common will to find and apply some adjustments for the disturbed relationships in our modern industrial system. Professor Taylor proceeds from this to consider how the experiences and work of the churches have already been affected in some degree by sociological study. First of all is the awakened consciousness in the Church, itself, a larger realization of the common needs of our common humanity as they are manifested in our common life. In the second place—

"With this deepening social consciousness the Church is gaining a more advantageous point of view. This view of the Word, for example, is investing our one Bible with all the charm and fresh power of a new revelation of its old truths to the present age. Its origin is all the more supernatural and divine because mediately derived from the common social conditions under which its revelations were given to men through men."

As a third point Professor Taylor asks whether there is not something lacking in our application of law and gospel when even in a country like ours which is nominally Christian and where professing members of the Church are numerically in the majority, anti-Christian conditions of society so largely prevail. The family relationship, he argues, needs the re-application of the Biblical conception to rescue it from the divorce legislation, from the social customs which operate against the home life and from the tenement-house conditions in our cities under which it is practically impossible for purity and orderliness to exist. It is through the disclosures of these conditions by sociological study and investigation that the Church "may expect God to convict us of our social sins of omission and commission and to enable us to do better."