

The Quiet Hour

THE HEALTH OF RELIGION.

Beloved, I pray that in all things thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.—III. St. John 2.

Mind, it is our best work that He wants, not the dregs of our exhaustion. I think he must prefer quality to quantity.—George Macdonald.

"Because I spent the strength Thou gavest me
In struggle which Thou never didst ordain,
And have but dregs of life to offer Thee—
O Lord, I do repent."

It is to be hoped that the days have passed, never to return, when people fancied that suffering was a passport to saintliness, and that men could win God's favor by inflicting pain on their bodies. Tennyson shows the dark horror of such a morbid faith in his "St. Simeon Stylites." The miserable ascetic on his high pillar of self-chosen torture, tells God that he has won the right to be a saint because his sufferings have been so great. He explains how he has worn a rope knotted round his body until it caused terrible ulcers. For three winters he had caused himself to be chained to a crag on the mountain side, with nothing to eat and drink except the chance gifts of strangers. Then for thirty years he had stood on a high pillar.

"In hungers and in thirsts, fevers and cold,
In coughs, aches, stitches, ulcerous throes and cramps.
I am wet
With drenching dews, or stiff with cracking frost.
I wear an undressed goatskin on my back;
A grazing iron collar grinds my neck;
And in my weak, lean arms I lift the cross,
And strive and wrestle with Thee till I die;
O mercy, mercy! wash away my sin."

To think that anyone calling himself a Christian should make for himself such a horrible caricature of the loving Father of us all! Why, it is worse than the tortures of fakirs, worse than the horrible sacrifices offered to Moloch, for it is the declaration that God takes pleasure in lifelong torture. How the dear God must be grieved when His children misrepresent Him so cruelly. Of course, it is true that souls are often purified by suffering—by the "terrible mystery of pain,"—and because our Father loves us He will not let us miss the gifts which only pain of mind or body can bring us. And yet His desire for His beloved—that is, for each of us—is that in "all things" we may "prosper and be in health."

How can we know this—do you ask? Why, by the revelation of the Divine Nature given us in Christ. Our Lord expressly says that anyone who hath seen Him hath seen the Father, and no one can study His life on earth and fancy that He took pleasure in suffering or sickness. He was the Physician of souls, indeed, but not less the Healer of bodies. Many instances of healing are described in detail, but these are only glimpses of His busy days, when "the sick came in multitudes, and He healed them all." Only those who had not faith enough to come to Him received no benefit. And, if He showed so plainly that He wanted people to be healthy, then we are sure that health is still what God wants us to have and he must wish us to seek after it with unremitting hopefulness. Sickness is permitted in this world, even as sin is permitted, but

our business is to fight them as our Master fought them. And God has not left us to fight alone. These marvellous bodies of ours are fighting for health all the time, in spite of the hindrances we put in their way. We are exhausted by work, or pain, or grief, and we fall asleep. Then, quietly and secretly, God pours new life into brain and muscles and nerves, giving health to his beloved in sleep. We injure the body in any part of its delicate mechanism and the self-acting repair shop goes to work instantly to heal the damage. Even the invisible disease-germs that are such dangerous enemies, cannot invade our bodies without finding an army on guard ready

the health and happiness of His children, that God does not take pleasure in sickness and suffering, but has means to remove our anguish, that faith and trust in God bring peace to the heart, that the moral life powerfully affects the physical life, and that if these blessings are really contained in our religion it is a pity that we should not enjoy them."

Our business—as Christians—is to be as healthy as possible. Unless we are absolutely sure there is no way of escape, it is wrong to sink down with meek helplessness into chronic invalidism. Patience is sometimes vicious, when it is submission to evils that can be cured. The body is the instrument through which the soul must do most of its work, and if we are to do effective work for our Master we must keep that instrument in as good condition as possible. There are people who are very particular about oiling and cleaning sewing machines or ma-



UNDER THE BLOSSOMS.

to repel every attack. One physician declared: "We amuse our patients while nature cures them." Another man wrote on the wall of his hospital: "I dressed the wound and God healed it." Our bodies firmly believe in the religion of health, and even pain is a valuable danger-signal, warning us that something needs setting right.

Perhaps you may think that my business in writing a "Quiet Hour" is only to deal with souls, and bodies are out of my province. And yet the idea that "religion has nothing to do with bodies" is very far behind the times. Christians in these days are waking to the fact that men are made up of many different parts, and that Christianity is not the ideal religion unless it can help bodies and minds as well as spirits. Dr. Worcester, who is doing a wonderful work in healing nervous disorders at Emmanuel Church, Boston, says: "We do not consider restoration to health as in itself the end and aim of religion, but we do affirm that the fact of the Lord is ever set in the direction of

chines for doing farm work, and yet they take no pains to keep in good trim that far more valuable machine—the human body. It is kept going at lightning speed, without reasonable rest or recreation, food is tossed recklessly in without any regard for the feelings of the long-suffering digestive apparatus, and many other ways of tampering with God's good gift of health are only too common. We commit a sin when we try to live without rest, exercise and fresh air, unless the conditions are so exceptional that it really can't be avoided. If we are not well, then we are very sinful if we don't try to get well, so that we may do the work God puts before us with ease and gladness, instead of struggling miserably through it. If we are well, then let us thank God always for His great gift of health, and see that no reckless folly endangers its continuance.

And how are we to get well? Perhaps one way to health of body lies through the soul. When a paralyzed man was laid before Christ, He first helped the sick soul—"Thy sins be

forgiven thee"—and then raised the helpless body. Many are weak and miserable in body and mind because they are sick and weak in soul. In such a case the soul must first be cured, and the Great Healer is always ready. Prayer for forgiveness and for strength to conquer sin comes first, then comes a real battle against bad habits, which will result in improvement of the bodily health. Then there should be rational ways of living. It is wrong to deliberately depress ourselves or others by our surroundings. The story is told of a mother who had lost one of her four children and who made her three other children sad and depressed by her heavy crape clothes and veil. She paid no attention when they said that her clothes "hurt" them, but woke up to her mistake one day when one of the children took a pink bow off her doll and pinned it to her mother's black dress.

One person with pale, mournful face, and a weary headache, can depress a whole family. Our business, as the servants of the God of Joy, is to cheer other people, never to depress them. So, if the headache can be cured, it should be cured—I don't mean choked back with headache powders. Sometimes a rest in fresh air or a cheerful call on a friend, sometimes a little wholesome fasting from indigestible food will work wonders. Perhaps the case is more serious and calls for a doctor's trained professional skill and knowledge. But, whatever is making your body less effective than it should be, don't submit to it in weak helplessness if there is any way to remedy the trouble. If pain is unavoidable, then we must rally all our powers to endure it bravely; but, for the sake of God and our fellows, as well as for our own sake, do let us get well, and keep well, if we can. God wants us to be healthy, our Lord healed all manner of diseases—diseases of body and mind, as well as of soul—and He will help us in our fight against every kind of evil. Religion should make us sane, healthy and bright, not morbid, sentimental or doleful. It is intended to make us happy in this world as well as in the next. Our bodies are holy—being temples of the Holy Ghost—and should be consecrated in the most effective service we can render.

"Let my soul beneath her load
Faint not through the o'erworn
flesh;
Let me hourly drink afresh,
Love and peace from Thee, my
God."

HOPE.

THE QUIET HOUR.

My heart is tired, so tired to-night—
How endless seems the strife!
Day after day the restlessness
Of all this weary life;
I come to lay the burden down
That so oppresseth me,
And, shutting all the world without,
To spend an hour with Thee,
Dear Lord,
To spend an hour with Thee!

I would forget a little while
The bitterness of fears,
The anxious thoughts that crowd my
life,
The buried hopes of years;
Forget that mortal's weary toil
My patient care must be,
A tired child, I come to-night,
To spend an hour with Thee,
Dear Lord,
To spend an hour with Thee!

A foolish, wayward child, I know—
So often wandering;
A weak, complaining child, but O,
Forgive my murmuring;
And fold me to Thy breast,
Thou who hath died for me,
And let me feel 'tis peace to rest
A little hour with Thee,
Dear Lord,
One little hour with Thee!

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