

Hope's Quiet Hour

The Master's Command.

Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.—S. John 5 : 8.

"If you're sick with something chronic, And you think you need a tonic, Do something. There is life and health in doing, There is pleasure in pursuing, Doing, then, is health accruing, Do something."

Beneath the five porches beside the pool of Bethesda a crowd of miserable sufferers huddled. Some groped about in helpless blindness, others could move only with the help of a crutch. Some were unable to move at all. At times the spring bubbled in a way which appeared miraculous (see the revised version, which leaves out part of verse 3 and the whole of verse 4; as these verses about the angel troubling the water and giving it healing properties are not in most of the ancient manuscripts). Hoping to be cured of their diseases, those who could move hurried to step into the bubbling water. But for days or weeks, or even months—when the water was still—they sat idly waiting. So life slipped away unused. One who could not do a whole man's work did not trouble himself to do anything. They were very miserable; not only because they were sick and poor, but because they had no useful occupation. People sometimes speak as if work were a curse imposed on man because of sin; but the Bible account is very different from that while Adam was yet sinless he was given the farmer's task of keeping the beautiful park of Eden in good order. "The LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it." And it was Eve's God-given duty to help her husband. Sin changed the work from a joy to a hard task. It became a fight against thorns and thistles; and yet work is still a blessing and not a curse. Are the sick and physically disabled to be laid aside in helplessness, cut off from the joy of doing?

As the Healer walked among the sick that day He saw a man who had been more or less helpless for thirty-eight years. There he lay, growing more and more hopeless; for, when the pool was troubled, more active people pushed past him and stepped first into the pool. He was able to move, but slowly; and probably did not strengthen his muscles by daily exercise, and so was more feeble than he need be.

Lying there, on the old mat which served him for a bed, he daily grew more helpless in body and in will-power.

The Master—who always knows what is in man, and what he is capable of becoming—looked down at this wreck of humanity and asked a strange question: "Wilt thou be made whole?" It was strange, because the answer appeared to be self-evident. It would seem almost cruel to go to a poor weak cripple and say: "Wilt thou be made whole?" And yet, though a man may want to be well, he may not "will" to be well. This man wanted to be well, and struggled towards the pool whenever the water was troubled, hoping for a miraculous cure. But to "will" a thing is far stronger than to want it. A miserable drunkard may "want" to escape from the chains of his slavery, and may still yield to temptation every day; but, when he "wills" to conquer, it is a very different matter—at least, if he fights prayerfully and determinedly, rising after each fall and turning to God for daily help.

The impotent man eagerly began to explain his difficulties to the Stranger who seemed so sympathetic. But the story of woe was cut short by that startling command: "Rise, take up thy bed and walk." It was God's will that he should stand up and do a man's work in the world. When he willed to do God's will, he gained strength to take up the bed which had carried him so long.

"Afterward Jesus findeth him in the

temple, and said unto him, Behold thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee."

This is a robust age, and we no longer think a man is a saint because he looks emaciated and pale. It is a sin to be ill if health can be won. Our Lord was strong and healthy, or He never could have worked and endured as He did. He wanted men to be healthy, and his daily work was giving strength to weak bodies and sick souls.

In the case of this impotent man, it would seem (verse 14) as if his weakness of body was the result of soul-sickness (sin) as it very often is. But he was called to fight against sickness of body and soul—as we all are.

I am not saying that every sick or helpless person can be well if he wills to be well. The facts of life are dead against that theory, and some of the noblest souls are living in frail tabernacles of flesh.

But, all the same, no one has any right to settle down into hopeless invalidism without a fight for health. "Wilt thou be made whole", in body and in soul? is the question of the Divine Healer. One invalid drags out a weary existence in a darkened room, though sunlight and fresh air would certainly add to her vitality and usefulness. She wants to be well, but does not will it enough to rouse herself to a vigorous fight for health.

Another worried woman persistently talks about her troubles, refusing to turn her attention to other things, or thinks of them in morbid fashion until she makes herself and her family wretched. It has been said of some people that "they are only happy when they are miserable"—but no one has any right to poison the mental atmosphere of other people. Happiness is largely a matter of will-power, and of a reasonable amount of work. To-day I expect to visit a bright-faced young woman who has been lying on her back for two years. Her right hand is almost helpless, but she can hold a crochet needle in it, and she is able to earn a little money by her beautiful crochet-work. She has a very happy face, and never talks about her helplessness. She forgets her own troubles by the simple process of thinking about other people. She is unable to rise and walk—in body—but her glad spirit is not tied to her bed. It is possible for such apparently helpless people to receive the promise: "They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles."

The "impotent man" was not told to do a great work in the world. That

call might come later, but at first he was only encouraged to carry himself and the mat which had carried him for many years. "Bear your own burden first; after that try to help carry those of other people." Ella Wheeler Wilcox has said that all the people in the world belong to one of two classes—they are lifters or leaners.

Our first business must always be to accept cheerfully and bravely the special cross of trouble, pain, disappointment or loss which is given us to endure. But many troubles are manufactured daily by ourselves. What can't be cured should be endured, in the bright spirit of our wounded soldiers; but let us make very sure first that it can't be cured. The "impotent man" could walk a little, before that wonderful day when he heard the voice of the Good Physician (see ver. 7). But he did not make use of the power he possessed, and so his weak body grew daily weaker and his muscles became flabby from want of exercise. Don't give in unless you must; but, if your body is hopelessly weak, see to it that your mind and spirit are not allowed to lie helpless also. It is foolish as well as wrong to say dolefully: "I have a quick temper, but I can't help it" or "I feel so downhearted and miserable, I can't help showing it" or "I am selfish, and it is impossible to change one's nature!"

Life is—or should be—a fight against evil. God says to each of us, "Wilt thou be made whole?" and prayer is the mighty weapon He offers us. By it we link our weak strength with Almighty power. Those who wait on the Lord keep on renewing their strength, they will never submit to defeat for, in His might, they are sure of final victory.

Our Lord has declared that by faith men can remove mountains, but "faith without works is dead." By faith in Christ the impotent man was cured, but he was required to do something himself. He was told to rise up and walk. If had not tried to obey this apparently impossible order he would not have been cured.

When men have faith that a thing can be done, and have will and determination to fight on, in spite of disappointments and many failures, they are victorious in God's sight. Life is not finished on this side of death. Fight on, God waits to crown His victors.

"The seed must die before it beareth flower,
So we may pass by hidden, silent growth
To nobler power."

DORA FARNCOMB.

The Dollar Chain

The Dollar Chain fund wishes to reach \$5,000 as soon as possible, hence those who have not yet contributed, but would like to contribute through this channel for the sufferers in Europe, and the soldier boys in the trenches, may wish to do so at this opportunity. Address simply to The Farmer's Advocate and Home Magazine, London, Ont.

Contributions from Sept. 7 to Sept. 14: "Helen", Blyth, Ont., \$5.00.

Amount previously acknowledged.....\$4,887.55
Total to Sept. 14.....\$4,892.55

Current Events.

The date for Thanksgiving has been changed to October 8th.

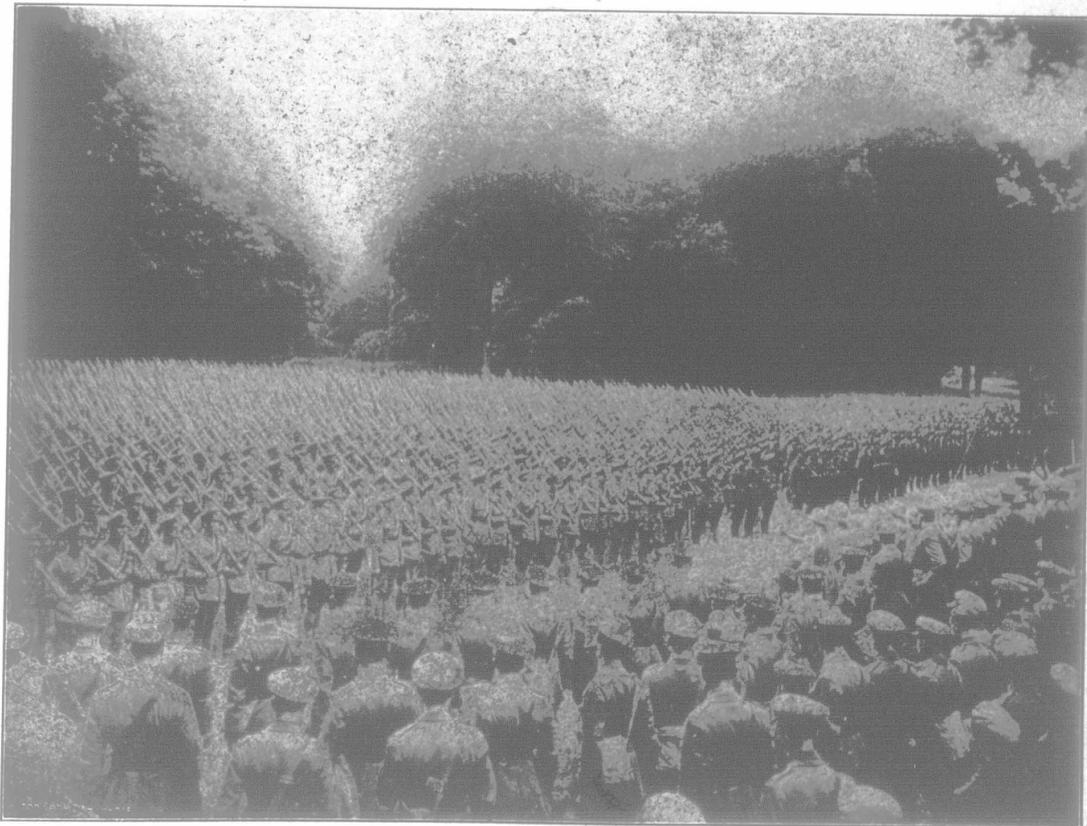
The Medical examination of Canada's first draft under conscription started in Toronto on Sept 15.

The United States will prohibit the shipping of coal to Canada by the Great Lakes, as has hitherto been done, to the expense of the Northwestern States. Henceforth coal can only be sent to Canada under license and by the railways.

A remarkable and very effective airplane motor has been perfected in the United States and will be used in new airplanes for the war.

Major W. A. Bishop, the Owen Sound, Ont., aviator who brought down 40 German planes, is returning to Canada for a short rest. He has been awarded the Victoria Cross, a Military Cross, and the Distinguished Service Order. When he goes to England again he will be Chief Instructor in Aerial Gunnery and Squadron Commander in the British Aerial Fleet.

One of the sensations of the past week was the discovery that military information was being given to Germany through Swedish officials in Mexico and the Argentine Republic. At once Argentina showed her temper by stoning the German Legation at Buenos Ayres and handing his passports to Count



Field of Steel where British Hold Great Service at Beginning of Fourth Year of War. Thousands of men assembled to pray before going into battle.—Underwood & Underwood.