

Pastor and People.

HE RESTORETH MY SOUL.

I am often so weary of sorrow,
So weary of struggling with sin,
So timid concerning the morrow,
So faithless of entering in
To the beautiful rest that remaineth
Secure in the city of God,
Where shall enter no evil that staineth,
Nor ever the spoiler hath trod.

But aye when the struggle is sorest,
And dark are the clouds on my soul,
Dear Lord, the sweet cup that Thou pourest
Has balm, and I drink and am whole.
From the quenchless old well of salvation
I quaff the pure waters divine,
And a sense of triumphant elation
Is thrilled through this spirit of mine.

No hand but Thine own, blessed Master,
Could comfort and cheer in the day
When the touch of a sudden disaster
Has cumbered and tangled the way.
No look but Thine own could illumine
When night gathers black o'er the land,
And strength that is failing and human
Lies prone on the desolate strand.

But ever thy help is the nearest
When help from the earth there is none,
And ever the word that is dearest
Is the word of the Crucified Son;
And aye when the tempest-clouds gather
I fly for sweet shelter and peace
Through the Son to the heart of the Father
That terror and tremor might cease.

He restoreth my soul, and I praise Him
Whose love is my chrisom and crown;
He restoreth my soul, let me raise Him
A song that His mercy will own.
For often so weary of sorrow,
So weary of fighting with sin,
I look and I long for the morrow,
When the ransomed their freedom shall win

Margaret E. Sangster.

FOR THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

FROM THE SICK BED TO THE PULPIT WITH THE PSALMIST'S TESTIMONY.

BY REV. A. H. SCOTT, M.A., OWEN SOUND.

Not every one who has passed through seasons of trouble can say with David—"It is good for me that I have been afflicted." Yet those of God's children, whom He has led through the furnace of affliction, when they examine carefully and properly His dealings must concur in the correctness of the Psalmist's statement, and say of the Lord—He doeth all things well.

There is a notion among some that, when affliction falls upon a person, or upon a home, it indicates the falling upon that person or family of God's wrath. Not necessarily so. Not usually so. The wicked by their wickedness may incur God's anger and have special judgments sent to them. But to say in a general way that affliction is a token of God's anger, is to say what we believe to be incorrect. Affliction is rather a token of God's love. It marks the correcting hand of God; it indicates the teaching hand of God. It signifies the heavenly Father's interest in His child. The disowned and banished prodigal receives correction no more in the home of childhood. But the other son who is at home receives the correction of his father. There is a banishment from God, the dread consequences of which I trust no reader of mine shall ever know. But do not be carried away with the falseness of the declaration that affliction is a mark of God's disfavour. What saith the Scripture? "If ye be without chastisement, . . . then are ye bastards and not sons." "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons." It is well when affliction draws to the Lord. Blessed results are sure to follow when, after a season of retirement or distress, the Christian can say with David—"It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

The afflictions that come to mankind are of a varied character. There are spiritual sorrows, and sorrows other than spiritual. There are afflictions that come through war, plague, pestilence. There are distresses that fall upon us when the unexpected happens, when death comes on the water or on the land. There is the sore affliction when disgrace comes upon a home, when the husband, or wife, or child, brings grief to the dwelling. And there is the affliction that is laid upon us for the time as the active one is laid

aside from his activity, as the one accustomed to health is thrown upon the bed of prolonged illness. Out of such afflictions and out of many others has come good. God's hand has operated so that there have been grand results. Out of darkness light has arisen. From the soreness of the chastening healing has followed. Then the benefited sufferer may say with the Psalmist—"It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

First of all, we may learn that when the Lord sends affliction He means it for some good; it may be to cure the person of some bad habit. It may be to teach patience, or tenderness, or sympathy. It certainly is intended to make us better, more like Jesus. Nothing takes place without God's knowledge. Nothing comes without His permission or sending. Affliction is from Him and affliction works in one of two ways. It hardens and drives farther from God, or else it makes more tender and draws nearer to the Saviour. It is sad when the former is the result. It is always good when we are attracted to Jesus.

In the cloud of affliction that overhangs those who are susceptible to teaching there is a "silver lining." Sorrows open the way to joys; and afflictions are oft the harbingers of delightful blessings. It seems hard at the time of the distress, yet it is true that God has good in view when He upturns our plans and lays His hand upon us. The lion in Samson's day must be killed before honey could be taken from the carcass. The trees of our forests need the winter's frost that sap may be gathered for the spring's blossom. The sun seems to be brighter after the storm, and the birds' song seems sweeter after the confinements of the winter. "Spices smell sweetest when pounded," and "vines are the better for bleeding." The children of Israel found Elim's waters the sweeter because they had tasted of Marah's bitterness. And the children of our heavenly Father return to the duties of life, made better because they had been closeted with Him in the hours of bereavement. When the hand that led into affliction leads out again, the improved disciple is prompted to the utterance of the sweet singer of Israel—"It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

A second lesson from affliction is that service rendered to God in active life is not the only service that can be given Him. He expects that service, but often He expects something else. In our health we come to our pulpits to lead our people in the public service and to preach. We come to our worshipping places to worship. When the muscle is strong and the spirit brave, the Christian serves God in active life. Oh, that is good! Believer, do that heartily and well. This is the labour that brings in the best return. But isn't it sometimes thought that when our activity is taken from us, when our strength is reduced to helplessness, and we are taken aside from our ordinary duties—isn't it sometimes thought that then we cease serving the Lord? Oh, it is a mistake. The Lord seeks our service in whatsoever place He puts us. Our service of waiting and enduring on the sick bed, or in the secluded place, is just as acceptable in His sight as the service rendered when the body is strong.

John the Baptist was doing God's service in the desert alone, as acceptably as when he was gathering the crowds in the land of Palestine. Paul was serving his Master as much when the chains were about his person in the Philippian prison, as when he was delivering his address from the platform at Athens. Lying between two soldiers in an Eastern cell, Peter was serving just as efficiently as when preaching his sermon on the day of Pentecost. Elijah was Elijah at the brook with the ravens, as well as at Carmel with the prophets of Baal. The Christian invalid is doing the work of the Lord on the bed of affliction as well as when restored to the activities of health. Let this be remembered. "They also serve who only stand and wait." "Wait on the Lord" is a significant injunction of inspiration. The afflicted child of God who can enter into the spirit manifested by David when he said, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted" can doubtless concur in the experience thus expressed.

I have learned by knocking at heaven's gate
The meaning of one golden word that shines about it—
"Wait."

For, with the Master whom we serve, is not to ride or run,
But only to abide His will—well waited is well done.

Affliction teaches a third lesson—the nothingness of man. No one of us has anything earthly to

boast of. The strong man is found depending on his strength, but sickness soon proves the foolishness of that dependence. The good need this teaching very often, and when we have that need it is well that the Lord sends affliction to afford the supply. Affliction reveals to us what we really are—poor, weak, frail creatures with nothing in ourselves to depend upon. Thanks be to God that in Christ we have everlasting strength.

Afflictions teach us to estimate man correctly. It is a dangerous thing for any of us to put too much dependence upon any person—father, mother, husband, wife, son, daughter, guide, partner, master, friend, minister. The one upon whom earthly dependence is placed is as liable as ourselves to be cast down suddenly, or to be taken away from us. No matter how important a part we play in the community, in the family, or in the Church, it is a dangerous thing to place over much reliance on man.

Since coming from the chamber of sickness I met a man on one of the streets of our town. With gratefulness in his heart, and with a warm shake of the hand, he said he was glad to see me out again. He went on to remark that it was a good thing I had been spared; for, added he, if you had been taken away it would have been a death stroke to the congregation. He said more that I must not repeat. He said it all sincerely and with a fondness that I would seek ever to reciprocate. But, in these expressions, affectionate as they were, was there not a something calculated to lead to the conclusion that some were leaning toward an error that ought to be dispelled? As far as the one who speaks is concerned it might have been otherwise. Instead of your coming out as usual to this place of worship to find the old voice leading in our devotions, God might have ordered it otherwise. That sickness might have ended in death, and you might have been following the hearse that was carrying my body to the cemetery on yonder hill, and you might have witnessed the lowering of a body, asleep in Jesus, into the place prepared for it. But what of that? My spirit would have winged its flight to the soul's home, and the sun would have risen as usual the next morning, and I suppose you would have been found at your work the next day, and if you deserved it God would supply you with another faithful minister to lead you. Why, we are not a necessity in the home or in the church. Let man be never so good and faithful—do not place too much reliance on him. Solomon saith well, "Whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe."

While we are together, that there should be among us mutual sympathy, tenderness and love, we should appreciate each other's excellencies, we should see, the one in the other, an earnest desire to be a prosperous people. But in attaining to these things let us have as our starting-point and our dependence—"In Me is thine help." Then, what mutual confidence we repose in one another will be right because our main confidence is in God.

There is a multitude of additional uses and blessings of affliction. But one other reflection must suffice. The season of affliction is a poor one, as a rule for beginning the great work of life. Left for its beginning until this season, means too often never begun. And life's great work never begun—the soul never cared for—thoughts of the eternal future become appalling.

Experience warrants the assurance that the seed of the new life has been implanted by the Holy Spirit at the time the sore stroke brought some one to feel that he was alone with God. But the cases where permanent spiritual results have flowed from such distress are very few, when compared with those where appearances of good have been followed by the last state being worse than the first, as health returned. While experience brings painful recollections of those for whose salvation there have been prayers and strivings, but who have passed off to deal with the solemnities of eternity unprepared. Who of us, having to deal with men, could not tell of sorrowful exits to the other world? A man well on in years was lying low with a fatal illness, he was racked with pain. He spoke of his soul, his sins, his future. When directed to Christ he said he had given his many years to Satan, and he was ashamed to offer the time that remained to God. When pointed to the Friend of the chief of sinners, he said his smothering and pain were so great that he could not look nor think nor trust, and he died. Another man was taken into