

by the cross of death and the absolute loss of all earthly possessions. Nevertheless, He also drew another picture, and maintained that all these possible privations would be made up many times over even in this life in some way, which would fully meet their expectations when realized as an experience. Still He is silent concerning any discrimination between pain as the result of persecution and pain as the outcome of sickness. And yet it does seem that it would have been a very simple matter, indeed, for Him to have made that discrimination, if it was to be.

It might have been some alleviation to Paul and Silas, when enduring the terrible pain from their lacerated backs, and feet wedged in the stocks, that they were proof against all pain from diseases, but it requires a very imaginative mind to conceive of it. Indeed, we ourselves cannot but conceive of such knowledge just then as rather tantalizing in its character. Few there are who read over Paul's list of sufferings, even leaving out the infirmity in his flesh, whatever that might be, who would not welcome an occasional sickness in life as decidedly preferable and easier to endure.

It may be the perversity of human nature, but we believe, in ninety-nine cases out of every hundred, Christians, and very good ones at that, would elect to be eaten up of microbes in the form of disease rather than be eaten of wild beasts in the public arena.

Perhaps it was because of there being no promise against torture and violent death which made the first Christians ignore any promise concerning immunity from the lesser evils of disease, even if it was given; and perhaps, too, they did not realize sufficiently the possibility of a time coming when persecution unto death would cease, and so hand down these promises, in clear-cut shape, to a generation when they would be more appreciated.

Certainly, if, with the fact of the cessation of physical torture and martyrdom, we could promise certain freedom from accident, pain and disease, we might make a very high bid to the selfishness of mankind in our efforts to secure them to Christianity. What a changed

meaning, too, all this would put into the words of Jesus, when planting His cross at the entrance of the narrow way, for now we could preach that whosoever follows the Saviour of the world shall know no pain—the outcome of persecution or disease—and in addition shall have all the promises of the Gospel fulfilled in their lives here and hereafter. Truly, then, this might be called the millennial age as compared with the times of the apostles. “As sorrowful yet always rejoicing,” would now be an obsolete experience, and it might be increasingly difficult to have the prayer answered concerning fellowship with the sufferings of Christ. Still if all this would be, and is God's order, it should be thankfully acquiesced in.

But we learn from our study of Christ and His teachings that in some way or another all that will live godly shall suffer, and that even when His beloved sons we will be chastened and scourged, so that like our Master we may be made perfect through sufferings. This being the case, it is but of small importance that we should be able to restrict somewhat our Heavenly Father in His choice of afflictions. Let it suffice us that we are in the hands of infinite love, and we need not falter in our loving regard if He does treat us as He did His only begotten Son. With loving restfulness we can dwell in the shadow of His presence, knowing that no pain can trouble our person, but under the personal supervision of Him who doeth all things well.

“Thankful we take the cup from Him,
Prepared and mingled by His skill.”

In these confidential relations is perfect rest. It is His rest, no matter what be our experiences of privation or plenty, of sickness or health, of calamity or prosperity; yes, we can cease even to desire to have the question at the head of this article answered.

“My son, take it not grievously if some think ill of thee, and speak that which thou wouldst not like to hear. If thou dost walk spiritually, thou wilt not much weigh fleeting words.”—*Thomas à Kempis.*