

PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

POSSESSING THE SOUL IN PATIENCE.

"When God sends a trouble into the house, and lets it stay there, it can always be borne. He never sends the sorrow that He does not send the grace to sustain it at the same time."

So said a dear friend to me yesterday, as we sat in her pleasant parlour. The talk between us was about a trouble, great and unusual, which had been for some time an abiding presence in her beautiful home. I saw the traces of care and anxiety in the silvery hair, on the thin worn face, more deeply lined than of old, and in the shadow under the large soft eyes. But the countenance was sweet as ever, with the old gleams of merriment; the smile came readily to the lips, and the voice was as full of courage as it had been when she was younger.

My friend had learned the secret of possessing her soul in patience. She had learned it sitting at the Master's feet.

In these days of activity in our gardens we find great pleasure in watching the blooming of our favourite flowers. I like to find analogies between them and the best qualities in character. The rose, red, fragrant, full of vivid, passionate life and sweetness, is the flower of love. The pansy is heartsease, and what is heartsease but content? The lily is my symbol of fortitude, white and pure and royal, even as I have seen some dear children of God triumphant though in darkened chambers, and on beds of pain. The mignonette, most unobtrusive, yet most tenderly subtle, of all things in the floral world, is my emblem of patience. Its perfume pervades its neighbourhood.

The patient soul is the victorious soul. Do we go, as the princes went, in the fairy tales, after the golden water, the singing leaves, and the talking birds of life? In other words, are our hearts set on some distant and difficult good, for which we are willing to suffer, if only we may obtain the prize? What can we do without patience? It is the scholar's coat of mail, the pastor's strength, the mother's beautiful garment.

A singular thing about patient people is that they are oftenest found among the naturally impatient. The high-mettled, quick-tempered, thorough-bred person having attained self-control through discipline, or mastered his infirmities through waiting upon the Lord, becomes beautifully calm, gentle in disposition, and tolerant of others' faults and foibles.

This is not the result of easy experience either. In some cases it requires a long training in the school of disappointment, and many a defeat lays the ambitious spirit low, before the good qualities dominate the evil.

Sanctification proceeds slowly, but if the Christian be indeed joined to the Master, it cannot stand still.

Whatever be the natural drawbacks, however toilsome the way, and reluctant the yielding of the sin that so easily besets, in all vital piety there is growth. Patience, therefore, when things seem to be against you, poor tired housekeeper. Though your little round of daily duties chafes you with its monotony, though the tribulations of the kitchen wear you out, though careless hands deface or destroy your treasures, wait as one in a strong fortress, which no enemy shall scale. Have patience with your own irritability, your own lack of poise, your transient lapses. Because you have failed to-day, do not expect to fail to-morrow. Though you lose ground again and again, yet in time, if your eyes be lifted heavenward, you will possess your soul in patience.

This is a good advice for the teacher, who sees no fruits rewarding conscientious work. It is a good advice for those who are surrounded by the ungenial or unsympathetic. Hope thou in God, whosoever thou art—that art, as the old Bible phrase puts it, disquieted within thee; hope thou in God, and thou shalt yet praise Him.

I once heard a nervous and fussy superintendent complaining querulously, in a teachers' meeting, concerning the disorder in his school. "The more I talk," said he, "the worse the children act." It was, alas! mournfully true.

A plain woman sitting by observed, "Mr. ———, noisy parents, who scold a great deal, generally have very troublesome boys and girls. A quiet manner, and a look from some people, goes farther than fault-finding."

The excellent man had every desirable quality except patience, and wanting that, he was unfit to govern others.

I end as I began with my friend's thought, for it fits every crisis: "When God sends trouble, He also sends grace." Patience is to be had for the asking.—*Margaret E. Sangster, in S. S. Times.*

A HYMN FOR THE CONQUERED.

I sing the hymn of the conquered, who fell in the battle of life—

The hymn of the wounded, the beaten, who died overwhelmed in the strife;
Not the jubilant song of the victors, for whom the resounding acclaim
Of nations was lifted in chorus, whose brows wore the chaplet of fame—
But the hymn of the low and the humble, the weary, the broken in heart,
Who strove and who failed, acting bravely a silent and desperate part;
Whose youth bore no flower on its branches, whose hopes burned in ashes away;
From whose hands slipped the prize they had grasped at—who stood at the dying of day,
With the work of their life all around them, unpitied, unheeded, alone,
With death swooping down o'er their failure, and all but their faith overthrown.

While the voice of the world shouts its chorus, its pæan for those who have won—

While the trumpet is sounding triumphant, and high to the breeze and the sun
Gay banners and streamers are waving, hands clapping, and hurrying feet
Thronging after the laurel-crowned victors—I stand on the field of defeat
In the shadow, 'mongst those who are fallen and wounded and dying—and there
Chant a requiem low, place my hand on their pain-knotted brows, breathe a prayer,
Hold the hand that is helpless, and whisper, "They only the victory win,
Who have fought the good fight and have vanquished the demon that tempts us within;
Who have held to their faith unswayed by the prize that the world holds on high;
Who have dared for a high cause to suffer, resist, fight—if need be, to die."

Speak, History, who are life's victors? Unroll thy long annals and say—
Are they those whom the world called the victors, who won the success of a day?
The martyrs, or Nero? The Spartans who fell at Thermopylæ's tryst,
Or the Persians and Xerxes? His judges, or Socrates? Pilate or Christ?

—*W. W. S., in Blackwood's Magazine.*

FEAR OF DEATH.

"The king of terrors," quoted from Bildad the Shuhite in Job, is generally accepted as a description of death. In the earliest ages death was regarded as the crowned monarch in the realm of the terrible—as the embodiment and highest manifestation of the fearful. In the feeling and convictions of all the ages this title of death has been accepted. Paul speaks of death as reigning—as a sovereign holding sway over the generations of men.

As there is naturally an instinctive clinging to life, so there is a natural aversion to death. But there are moral elements involved in the thought of death. It is somehow connected with sin, so that, besides the instinctive shrinking from it, there is the consciousness of guilt, and often of accountability and judgment. If death were merely a natural phenomenon, separated from all moral considerations, it could hardly be the sovereign of all that is most to be feared. Death owes its terrors to sin. As a terrible thing death is by sin. If there had been no sin, there had been no fear of death. If there had been bodily dissolution or change, there would have been nothing in it to excite aversion or apprehension. "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law." Here we have the reason of the terrible in death.

And death, as connected with sin, is also somehow connected with the devil. "Him that had the power of death—that is, the devil." The devil, through sin, may be said to have brought death into the world, and he still endeavours to wield it for his own malignant purposes. It is his work and instrument, and his dark and baneful presence is felt in the dying throes of the ungodly, and in the misery which the anticipation of death excites. Without Christ, or the revelation of future blessedness, men are in bondage to the fear of death. "Who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." The soul is bound by this chain. The fear of death is as a gloomy

prison-house. It binds, disables, shuts up the spirit, and crushes out the real manhood. Without God, death reduces us to the condition of cowering slaves. This was the state of the world without the Gospel, and it is the condition of those who are not building upon Christ as "the Prince of Life." The thought of death may be temporarily dismissed, and the tormenting fear may be held in check by absorbing pleasures or business. But the dismal vision will sometimes break through, and none can entirely dispel the repulsive conviction. Amidst our recreations, our busy pursuits, and the race for wealth and honour, there is always this solemn undertone, and murmur of a coming catastrophe.

How fearful death is to most men is exhibited in the general endeavour to banish the very thought of it. There have been those who, without Christ, have seemed to meet death without fear. Throwing off all convictions of God and of a future life, they have resigned themselves to the inevitable and to annihilation. And there are those who contemplate death without hope, and as the end of all, and avowedly are not afraid. It is with them rather the indifference of despair. Fear, if really overcome, is overcome at the expense of their moral sensibility, and by the sacrifice of the noblest aspirations, and the grandest attributes of human character. Not to fear death is something abnormal, unusual, apart from the hopes of the Gospel.

Christ is the only Saviour from this tormenting fear. He died "that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Deliverance from this fear is among the clearest privileges of the Christian. Dying grace is, of course, for the dying hour; but there is also a grace in life which divests death of its appalling aspect, and delivers from the fear of it. Some Christians perhaps never quite overcome the sense of terror in life, and we have known such to triumph in the final struggle. A lingering apprehension or a trace of fear should not discredit our hope, but there is a more excellent way. It is the office of perfect love to cast out fear, and when the spirit of adoption is in the heart, crying Abba Father, death cannot be the king of terrors. A full tide of spiritual life in the soul, the love of God shed abroad in the heart, and faith in Christ as "the resurrection and the life," will dispel the cloud. This victory over the fear of death is a victory in life, a positive triumph that floods all our days with light, that abolishes death as the disquieter of the soul, and that makes life and immortality a present assurance and possession.

DIOTREPES.

All we know about him is that he belonged to some Church to which the Apostle John was writing, and that he was characterized as one "who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them." Very severe is the denunciation which the apostle levels against him, and all the more severe when we consider the source from whence it is fulminated—the beloved disciple, the apostle of love: "Therefore, if I come, I will bring to remembrance his works which he doeth, prating against us with wicked words."

But we are not concerned so much about the man himself—John was entirely competent to attend to his case. We are concerned about his imitators. Diotrepes loved the first place; he was disposed to be troublesome unless he could have it. The race of Diotrepes is unfortunately not yet extinct. It is a curious illustration, by the way, of the fact that human nature does not change from age to age—that one of the very things that gave the apostle John trouble in one of the primitive Christian churches, is precisely one of the difficulties with which we must contend in our churches to-day. The matter will bear looking at a little.

There are not a few in our churches nowadays who are willing to work—or to appear to work—if they can be prominent. They are not born, so they think, "to blush unseen." They will not "waste their fragrance on the desert air," if they know it. They would consider it a gross defrauding of the left hand if they kept from it a knowledge of what the right hand was doing. If they can really or apparently be leaders, they will work, not otherwise.

Undoubtedly some of these persons are very efficient. The work that they do is of real service. But for all that, they are not models whom it is de-