

“Prayers and pains,” he used to say, quoting the favourite apothegm of John Elliot, “Prayers and pains can do any thing.” His prayers and pains the Lord blessed. The scene in the plantation, given in our opening paragraph, indicates the result. Like their teacher a year before, the two inquirers found peace in believing. An entry in Dr. Chalmers’s journal seems to indicate the breaking forth of his sunshine,—“*Sunday, March 1st.* Alexander Paterson, who called on me yesterday, called on me to-night also. He tells me that he has obtained more comfort.” And what kind of comfort is meant, we may gather from another sentence in the same entry, expressing his own. “I had a very near and intimate preception of my Saviour this evening. I felt joyful communion with God.”

But the reader shall hear the outpouring of the new convert’s heart. “I hope,” we find him writing to his friend Robert Edie, in 1812, “you are putting on strong resolutions to follow your great Redeemer, who came from the bosom of his Father, and tabernacled among sinful men. The time is drawing near, that we are to commemorate that awful event which took place at Jerusalem. Oh! the love of Christ—it passes all understanding. ‘Come saith the Lord, let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.’ Now, we are to sit down at the table of the Lord. We enlist ourselves to that great Captain of our salvation. We, therefore, must take the helmet of salvation, and the breastplate of faith.”

“It is not in man that walketh,” he adds, “to direct his steps. We must pray to God for his Spirit to help us in time of need. And this is a time of great need; for the devil will be going about like a roaring lion, to cast us down into the pit. Oh, my lovely friend, what think you of Christ? Do you find some warm love burning in your breast?”

After the two converts had been at the table, he again writes:—“I hope, my dear Robert, you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. We have enlisted ourselves to be his faithful soldiers, to fight under him; and he will be a faithful Captain. Oh, Robert! as we have vowed to be the Lord’s, may we defer not to pay our vows now unto him who is worthy to receive all honour and glory. Since we have tasted his body, may this be a means of dethroning sin that has so much dominion over us. May we live no longer to ourselves, but to Him who died for our sins, but is risen again. Oh that we could bear about with us the dying of our Lord! Oh that our thoughts were always settled upon him, and our conversation becoming the Gospel; for we must be Christians, not in word only, but in deed also.

“We must make head,” he continues, “against sin now. We must be forgetting the things which are behind, and be pressing on towards those things which are before. O God, do thou take up thy abode in each of our hearts! Oh, perfect thy strength in our weakness, and make thy grace sufficient for us! O Lord, hold up our goings! Let not our footsteps slip out of thy ways.”

And in another letter, also dated 1812,—“I wish that we could have our conversation in the heavens, then would sin become evil and loathsome in our eyes. Oh, may we be often at the throne of grace pouring out our hearts before God!”

These letters were written from the “Bothy” of a farm in the neighbouring parish of Logie, to which Alexander Paterson had removed after recovering from his illness. The friends used still to meet at the church of Kilmany each returning Sabbath. “I well remember,” says one who was a member of the congregation, “seeing Alexander Paterson seated before the pulpit, and how intense was the earnestness of his expression, whilst the truths of the gospel were so strikingly and faithfully delivered.” “When the service was over,” remarks the biographer of Chalmers, “his friend, Robert Edie, generally conveyed him part of the way home. About one hundred yards from the road along which they travelled, in the thickly-screened seclusion of a close plantation, and under the shade of a branching fir-tree, the two friends found a quiet retreat, where, each returning Sabbath evening, the Eye that seeth in secret looked down upon these two youthful disciples of the Saviour on their knees; and for an hour their ardent prayers alternately ascended to the throne of grace. The practice was continued for years, till a private footpath of their own had been opened to the trysting-tree.—*Rev. John Baillie.*

A SINGLE THREAD.

I recollect, in my childhood, a story I somewhere read making on me a very deep impression. To this day I not have lost it. It was the story of a venturesome lad who followed the dangerous craft of gathering bird’s eggs from the cliffs on the wild west