

A PASTORAL CALL.

BY J. N. MONTREAL.

The village of P—, on the River O—, was, in the year 18—, a poor scattered hamlet inhabited chiefly by Irish Roman Catholic labourers on what was to be the "O— ship canal." No Protestant Church was there; and the large, unpainted, wooden one used by the Romanists had been hastily built upon the site of one which an Orangeman, zealous for the truth and God and brotherly love, had burned down. I laboured there for two years, and preached there just twice in that time; for no Protestant congregation dared to assemble in the face of the outraged Catholic multitude. All the intercourse I had with the people was in visiting their houses.

Once, I took the liberty, as the only Protestant minister who regularly went to the village, of calling on a family from the town of M—, in the State of Vermont. It was my first visit. Only the lady of the house was at home. How refreshing it was, amid the roughness of that then unpolished place, to find a lady, educated beyond all her "environment," neat and tasteful in her apparel, gentle and refined in her bearing! Well, before leaving I spoke to her of religion, and prayed with her, not thinking but that, as in many other cases, I should find no better result than the respectful and almost timid reception of my message.

About two or three weeks afterward, as I was about to mount my horse, to go to a distant place to preach on the following morning, a letter was put into my hand. It had been opened, closed with paste hastily made of flour and cold water, and carried about till it had become soiled and crumpled. It contained the information that my visit to young Mrs. M. had resulted in her conversion. She had given her heart to Christ, and had found the secret of being at "peace with God." But, was there ever a blessing given without a "but" coming into the account of it? A geologist living in the village, an infidel they said he was, had endeavoured to convince her that her new experience was a delusion, and she lost her confidence and peace. She wanted me to see her immediately; and this request had been written nearly three weeks before. To comply with it then might be too late, in any case it would increase my ride on Sunday morning to fifteen miles before ten o'clock. Yet, go I must, and go I did. During the evening I was surprised not to see Mrs. M. The rest of the household conversed with me, amongst other things, about the delay of the letter. The geologist had intercepted it and had procured its delay until it should be useless. Science does not necessarily make men honourable.

During the evening I noticed a peculiar sound coming from an adjoining room. "Do you know what that sound is?" said Miss M., the sister-in-law of the lady I wanted to see. "It is Mrs. M. She is praying; and she says she will not cease until she regains her faith and peace of mind."

Being late I proposed that she should come with the rest of the household to family prayer. She came. In prayer I asked earnestly that, then and there, she might be blessed again. No emotion of encouragement assured me of any success. I arose, leaned my head, in great distress, on my hands upon the table. Could it be that God would not answer? A strange silence followed. Presently I heard a sweet, soft voice repeating slowly, "Blessed Jesus! hast thou heard his prayer? Blessed Jesus! hast thou heard his prayer?" I turned. She had not moved from her knees, but stayed there, with eyes uplifted, and hands clasped, calmly, but as in the presence of One unseen, repeating the same words. Then she arose, walked over to her husband, clasped him about the neck, and said till in tears he answered "yes," "Dear, won't you give your heart to Jesus?"

Shortly afterward she left for her former home in Vermont. I heard that she connected herself with "the Church" there. I never found out what church it was. I think it was the Congregational Church.

What has become of her? I cannot tell. All I can say is that, many a time, in doubts and difficulties, in misunderstandings and persecution, my heart goes

back to that scene amid the barren loneliness of the now almost forsaken village; and the thought of a God that answers prayer gives me comfort.

MR. GEORGE MULLER.

Toronto has been favoured during the past week by a visit from the widely known and greatly loved George Müller, of the Orphanage, Bristol, England. He has laboured in connection with the Young Men's Christian Association in this city during these past days of united prayer, and has done so with great power and universal acceptance. As is well known, Mr. Müller has for a very long period carried on a system of enlightened and most successful Christian benevolence on behalf of orphan children of both sexes. He has systematically, and on principle, repudiated all solicitation for funds, whether by direct appeal or indirect manipulation. His plan has been to make his own and his *protégé's* needs the subject of earnest and persevering prayer to God, and as the result of more than forty years' experience, he declares that he has found it the best, most efficient and most satisfactory of any. He has never, he says, really needed money or other help, but he has got it, "good measure, pressed down and running over." In this way he has been enabled to spend more than half a million of pounds sterling on his schemes of benevolence, has educated, fed and clothed thousands of orphans, and has had the satisfaction of seeing very many of these leading prosperous, honourable and Christian lives. In old age, he is as eager, energetic and successful in his work as ever, and is still as abundantly bringing forth fruit to the honour and glory of that Master whom he has served so long and whom he loves so well. His addresses in Toronto have been characterized by great simplicity, marked directness, occasional pathos, uniform seriousness and unobtrusive spirituality. It would be too much to expect that every one should have been satisfied with every word he spoke or with all his views of truth and duty. But his quiet words of earnest appeal, tender affection, and honest admonition and entreaty will have power in the hearts of not a few in this locality, for a far longer period and with far more beneficial results than ever had the boisterous declamation and the somewhat turgid and bizarre eloquence of much more pretentious revivalists. Amid the great outcry about the want of funds to carry on religious and benevolent enterprises, it might almost be worth while to inquire if Müller's plan had been honestly, earnestly and perseveringly put to the trial, and if, after all, it has been so far found wanting that God's people have been fain to fall back upon church soirees and bazaars, to say nothing of concerts, oratorios, raffles, and other instrumentalities even more grotesque and equally equivocal.

IN THE FOGS.

"Is it *always* foggy here?" inquired a lady passenger of a Cunard steamer's captain, when they were groping their way across the Banks of Newfoundland. "How should I know?" replied the captain gruffly—"I do not *live* here." But there are some of Christ's professed followers who do manage to live in the chilling regions of spiritual fog for a great part of their unhappy lives. They spend much of their time under a cloud, and but few streaks of sunshine brighten their leaden sky. Worse still, they seem most perversely to anchor themselves in those latitudes where the fogs prevail.

These sun-hiding mists generally are bred from their own hearts; they are the direct result of unbelief. The cloudy Christians are the doubting Christians. They manage to give house-room to every doubt that comes along. Instead of shutting the door in the face of these tormentors, as John Newton did when he sung "Begone unbelief! my Saviour is near"—they invite them in and harbour them. And never will these desponding disciples get rid of their doubts until they deal with them as the tippler must deal with the bottle, if he desires to reform. You must break up your sinful habit, cost what it may. When a doubt begins to creep over you, resist it! Pray to be delivered from it. Grasp the sword of the

Spirit which is the Word of God, and parry off the enemy by the dexterous use of God's promises. Study these, and keep them always within your reach. You did not issue those promises, but God did; you are not responsible for them, but God is. The setting of your own ignorance above His knowledge, and of your own weakness above His might, and of your own fears above His everlasting faithfulness, is an insult and a crime. Say to yourself emphatically—"This devil of doubt shall not torment me any longer. If I go on in this way I shall become an infidel and an outcast. I will not trifle with my Almighty Saviour again. I will cling to Him if I perish. Lord! I believe; help Thou my wicked unbelief!"

A positive act, and course of action on your part, will break up and scatter the fogs, just as heat vanquishes cold, and sunlight dispels darkness. During his earlier life Dr. Merle D'Aubigné, the Swiss historian of the Reformation, was grievously vexed with depressing doubts. He went to his old teacher for help. The shrewd old man refused to answer the young man's perplexities, saying, "Were I to get you rid of these doubts, others would come. There is a shorter way of destroying them. Let Christ be *really* to you the Son of God, the Saviour. Do His will. His light will dispel the clouds, and His Spirit will lead you into all truth." The old man was right, and the young D'Aubigné was wise enough to adopt his counsel. He hoisted anchor, and moved out of the region of fogs, and quietly anchored himself under the sunshine of Christ's countenance.

Active devotion to Christ's service is another cure for spiritual despondency. The faith faculty gets numb by long inaction, just as a limb becomes numb and useless if it is not exercised. The love-power grows cold if it is not kept fired up. When faith and love both run low, the soul easily falls into an ague fit. What you need is to get out of yourself into a sympathy with, and downright efforts for, the good of others. When a desponding Christian came to old Dr. Alexander for relief, the Doctor urged him to prayer. "I *do* pray continually." "What do you pray for?" The young student said, "I pray that the Lord would lift upon me the light of His countenance." Then, replied the sagacious veteran, "go now and pray that He will use you for the conversion of souls." This was on the principle that a man who is in danger of freezing, will keep himself warm by pulling others out of the snow. Zealous workers for Christ seldom drift into the region of fogs. They are too busy to nurse doubts, and the exercise of their graces keeps them in a glow.

The worst of all despondency is that which arises from wilful sin and wandering from Christ. A backslider's sins "like a thick cloud" separate him from Christ; a chilling eclipse comes on, and the countenance of Jesus is hidden from him. No church member who neglects prayer, who pursues crooked practices in business, who indulges sensual appetites, and who violates his vows, can expect to be happy. For him, while anchored on those "fishing-banks" of Satan, there can be no assurance of hope and no joy in the Lord. Secret sin is at the bottom of nine-tenths of the misery which Christ's professing people suffer. When sin is put away by repentance, the cloud moves off, and the blessed beams of the pardoning Saviour burst upon the soul. But while a Christian is steering away from the straight track of obedience and godly living, he is very sure to find himself *in the fogs*.—Rev. Theodore L. Cuyler, in *N. Y. Evangelist*.

WHOLESOME PIETY.

Naturalness in religion is what makes its appearance perfect and its influence healthy. The office of piety is simply to restore the soul. Melancholy and moroseness are symptoms of disease. And our whole nature is corrupt and sick. Christ is a physician, and the gospel is His specific cure for all our morbid humours. Hence to assert that a Christian is more useful by being happy-hearted, is nothing more than to say any man is more efficient in all that makes him a man in proportion as he is in perfect health. Spiritual health brings the whole man into exercise.