

A Work of Faith
and Labor of Love

THE BETHANY ORPHANAGE
82 HAYTER ST. ♣ TORONTO

TORONTO, 1903.

A WORK OF FAITH

AND LABOR OF LOVE



ABOUT twelve years ago Miss Mellick, now of Bethany Orphanage, was going around on crutches, suffering acutely from what seemed to be an incurable lameness. One doctor after another had treated her, yet "she was nothing bettered but rather grew worse." She had been afflicted thus for some seven years, and seemed to be doomed to a life of uselessness and suffering.

Her thoughts were drawn to the subject of Divine healing, simply in answer to earnest, believing prayer. She was led to believe that what was impossible with men was possible with God, and that the Lord Jesus was able, and might be willing, to make the lame to walk now, as in the days when He was here upon the earth. After some mistakes on her part as to what might be the Divine will in the matter, she committed herself, without any reserve whatever, into the hands of the Great Physician, and asked Him to heal her, if it was His will, in His own time and way. Then she waited.

In the course of a few months she was gradually, and very marvellously, set free from pain; the muscles of the shrunken limb were relaxed, she was enabled to lay

aside her crutches and to walk at large. Except for a slight halting and stiffness, she was able to take part in the duties of life as well as ever she had done before.

What was she to do with the life thus redeemed from painful suffering, and the power of service which God had been pleased to restore?

While waiting upon God for light and guidance, she was deeply impressed with the need of a home for orphan and homeless children, in which they could receive the motherly and individual care which could hardly be looked for in a large public institution. She knew of some mothers dying who had felt a deep pang of regret as they thought that their dear little ones were being left behind without any one to fill the mother's place, and give them personal love and care. God had promised to be the God of the orphan, the Father of the fatherless; might He not employ her in ministering to those helpless little ones cast upon His care? She had always had a natural love for children; and it seemed as if the Lord might qualify her for such a work, and use her in it for His glory.

An expression used about Moses (in Ex. 18:19) kept repeating itself over and over in her heart. Moses was to "be for the people of Israel to *Godward*." Could not she be "*Godward*" for the fatherless and motherless children? Might not she bring the orphans' cause to God, reminding Him in trustful prayer of their needs and of His promise to "preserve them alive"? Might not also the Lord use her as His agent in revealing to them His own Fatherly love, and His constant care in supplying their needs?

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She spoke to her pastor and his wife on the subject. The latter pointed out to her what she had suffered so recently in the past, and the possibility that she might be called to suffer again: that in her affliction she could not even bear that a child should come near her, or touch her. "You have no means of your own to carry on such a work; you have no rich or influential friends behind you. No woman in Toronto seems less fit than you to carry on such a work. However, if the Lord is calling you to it, go forward without fear. He will carry you through." "The foolishness of God is wiser than men: and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

"All is right that seems most wrong,
If it be His sweet will."

Miss Mellick prayed long and patiently about the matter. She revealed to some Christian friends what was laid upon her heart, and they prayed about it also. By and by a few contributed for the object until she had forty dollars. The conviction that God was leading her out into the work became more and more impressed upon her conscience; and at length, in humble trust and confident expectation, she put her hand into the mighty and "skilful" hand of Him who loves the little ones, and asked Him to lead her forward, and allow her to be "Godward" to His orphan children.

She rented a house, and moved into it a few pieces of furniture which had been given to her by friends. Then, with her Bible and hymn-book, she went in and took possession. Her very first act after entering was to go upon her knees and present the key of the house to the Lord. She asked Him to make the house His own; to fill it

evermore with His presence, and to control everything that would be done within its walls. She promised that the key of that door would never be turned against any of His orphan children whom He might see fit to send ; and that she would trust Him, if He sent the children, to send also the supplies of food, and clothing, and other things to meet their needs. Day after day, even week after week, she spent almost entirely alone in the house, in a kind of spiritual "retreat" ; holding communion with God in the study of His word, in praise and prayer—asking God to increase her faith, and to fit her in every way for the work, if He desired her to carry it on. During these weeks she had, when she went outside, some trying experiences. Some of her friends strongly disapproved of what she was doing. She was told that she was crazy. One told her that she was wanting to have an easy life for herself. Others turned away from her entirely and refused to speak. Many tears were shed over their alienation, but she carried her sorrow to the Lord, told Him all about it, and was strengthened and consoled.

Six weeks passed ; her means were almost exhausted, and no children appeared. Her pastor, calling one day, told her that George Muller had experienced a similar trial of faith when the great orphanage work began at Bristol. On the pastor's advice a number of friends, who sympathized in the matter, gathered together in the house for prayer. It was solemnly dedicated to God as "The Bethany Orphanage" for destitute, fatherless children, and God was asked to send the children if He desired the work to be carried on.

A few days after, the first children, two little orphan boys, were brought to the Home. The person who brought the children was staggered to find that Miss Mellick had such a very scantily furnished home; that she had no visible means of support, and no people of means or influence to fall back on; but that she was trusting simply and wholly on God to send, in answer to prayer, without soliciting a single human being, all that might be needed in her home. While she hesitated to leave the children, Miss Mellick looked out of the window and saw the two little fellows standing on the sidewalk with their little satchel in their hands. She felt her heart go out to them with eager desire to fill the mother's place to those whom God was sending, and on her pressing entreaty the woman brought the children in, and left them in her charge.

It will hardly be believed, but it is actually true, that when these two boys came into Miss Mellick's home her funds were entirely exhausted, and she had not enough, either of food or of money, to furnish them and herself with their very next meal! Her sister, however, living close at hand, as soon as she heard that at last some orphans had come, gave her a supply for their immediate wants; and thus the Orphanage was opened and the work began.

For months Miss Mellick's faith was very sorely tried, and sometimes almost gave way under the strain to which it was subjected. She felt assured if God meant her to care for His fatherless children that He would also furnish the needful supplies. If she waited on God continually there was no need to solicit help from any other. Yet, in spite of her trust and prayer, the supplies

were often very meagre and came but slowly in. Sometimes they were without milk or butter. Frequently they had no tea nor sugar; at times the fuel ran short. She wondered often that the answer to her prayers was so long in coming. Sometimes she felt rebellious, and almost ready to murmur against the Lord. She was trusting Him wholly, doing His work, seeking only His glory. Why then should she be so straitened? With strong crying and tears she pleaded that He would show what was hindering Him from giving more liberally in answer to her prayer. After a time the Lord revealed to her that she herself had been to blame. The Master's voice seemed to say, "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not. I want you to look more simply to God and trust only and wholly in Him, and this not only for yourself, but for your little ones. You have been praying for food, and clothing, and fuel, and money to pay the rent and purchase what you need. You have been seeking for gifts which God possesses, and looking and longing for *them*. Now I will show you a more excellent way. God is better than all His gifts. Centre your desires and prayers more on the *Giver*, and less on what He can bestow. Plead that the Lord Himself would come into your heart and home: and if you have God with you, the gifts will surely follow—all these things will be added unto you."

When a child is lost in a crowd, when it is in any sore distress or extremity, you cannot satisfy it with gifts, with gold, or food, or toys, or gay clothing. "Won't you, please, take me home? I want my mother—to be clasped in her loving arms—to have mine around her neck—to put my cheek

against her dear face—to look into her tender eyes—

‘ Those eyes that unto me do seem
More comfortable than the day.’

I do not care for what she has, or what she can give. I want herself.”

So must the soul of the believer be set on God and not on His gifts. He must “thirst for God, the Living God. When shall I come and appear before God?” “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!” “Thou, O Christ, art all I want.”

Thus Miss Mellick learned that, if God was dwelling in her home, it could not be that His children would want any good thing. From that day on which God taught her this lesson, and she humbly took it to heart, and put it in practice, things have been quite different with her from what they were before. Her faith has often been tried, and severely tried, but she has never been left desolate or destitute.

For over nine years she has thus lived in dependence on God, and on Him alone. Her family of orphans has increased. One after another has been sent by God, to be brought up for Him. Altogether thirty-two have been in the home. She has at present sixteen to be provided for. In all these nine years they have never missed one meal, and not one of the children has had to be kept at home from church or school for want of sufficient clothing. Yet, even in times when she was without money and without food, she has never once told her need to any but to God; she has never solicited help from man. She has not even once in all these years published a report of her work to the outside world or sought to draw special attention to it.

May we not say that this is almost a standing miracle? A great writer says that "The mind habituated to the regularity of nature becomes blunted to the evidence for God which it conveys." Such a special Providence as this "displays the Deity in action," and shows that "Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth." Miss Mellick in her small sphere is a witness, as much as George Muller in a larger one, that the Lord whom we worship is truly the Living God, still hearing and answering the believing prayers of those whose lives are fully surrendered to Him, and who are seeking only His glory. "The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord (the Lord, not what He has, or what He can give) shall not want any good thing."

We have said that Miss Mellick and her orphans have never missed a meal. Their bread has been given them, and their water made sure. Generally they have had enough and to spare. Occasionally they have had abundance. Yet we are not to think that they have escaped the discipline of the Cross. Sometimes their food has been of the very plainest. At times it has not more than sufficed to meet their needs. Frequently after one meal there has been no provision in sight for the next. Yet always the Lord has remembered that they were looking to Him and leaning on Him—as the Scotch say, "lippingen on" Him—for everything, and He has always sent, somehow, a supply in time. Not a day has ever come and gone without His giving them their daily bread. "Not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord God spake; all are come to pass and not one thing hath failed thereof."

In addition to the supply of daily needs, it may be mentioned that for several years, through special gifts from some benevolent friends, they have been enabled to spend some weeks in summer in the country, and the health of the children has thus been greatly benefited. It has been marvellous also how at these times, when separated from their home and friends, God has never forgotten them, but has "furnished for them a table in the wilderness."

It is impossible to give details of the story of the Orphanage during these past nine years. It must suffice to give a few incidents which may serve to illustrate the faithfulness of God to His trusting children.

One year Miss Mellick promised to one of the boys that, if the means were provided, he should have a special treat on his approaching birthday, which fell that year on Easter Monday. Monday came, but the means had not been furnished, and the birthday party was postponed. "Perhaps the Lord meant them to have it on Tuesday instead." Tuesday followed and then Wednesday, and it seemed as if the Lord did not mean that they should have the birthday celebration at all. On Thursday a young lady called, bringing a donation of several dollars. She explained that this was a balance of money remaining in the treasury of a class which had met during the winter for Bible study. The members, before dissolving, commissioned her to give the money to any benevolent object she might choose. As she was much interested in the orphans she had decided to give it to them. Miss Mellick and the children exhibited such symptoms of grateful joy on the arrival of the money that the young

lady's curiosity was aroused, and she inquired if they had been in any special need. Miss Mellick explained that the children had for days been praying for the money for a birthday treat, as we have just described. "Well," said the young lady, "I feel very sorry and much ashamed. I got that money over a week ago, and intended to come over with it last Friday, but have been putting it off from day to day."

"So you see, Sir," said Miss Mellick to the writer, "The Lord was faithful, and sent an answer to our prayer, but His messenger tarried by the way."

On a certain Sunday there was a rather scanty provision of food in the house. Even when in church the thought arose how was the Sunday dinner to be provided from the fragments that remained. Then, feeling that it was unworthy of a child of God to be anxious, or even occupied with such thoughts at such a time, when the Heavenly Father was caring for them, she dismissed the subject from her mind to attend wholly to the worship of the sanctuary. On their return home after service a neighbor met them, and said, "Miss Mellick, I am going to bring my dinner over to you and the children to-day. I was expecting some friends, and had provided a good roast, and pudding, and everything: and now they have sent word that they are not coming. At first I felt angry, and then consoled myself with the thought that I might give what I had prepared to your children." And so that Sunday dinner was provided.

Ere giving another illustration it may be well to explain that, before the Lord's day, Miss Mellick and the children offer special prayer for fifty cents for the collection in the

church and Sunday School. One Saturday morning a Christian woman in great need came to Miss Mellick for assistance, and she gave her fifty cents which she had reserved for the Sunday collection. She remembered, probably, the text, "He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth to the Lord. And that which he hath given will He pay him again." In the afternoon of the same day a friend of the orphans, passing near the Home, thought that it was time for him to go down again and leave a couple of dollars for their use. After deliberating for a minute he concluded to postpone his visit till Sunday evening, and passed by on the other side. Night came, and Miss Mellick had not got the fifty cents for the Sunday collection. Then the thought arose that she should not perhaps have given away the fifty cents to her neighbor. About ten o'clock at night she said to the oldest boy in the House, that this was the first time the Lord had failed to send the fifty cents in answer to their prayers. He replied that even yet it was not too late. Before half past ten a man did actually call with a gift of a dollar. Apologizing for the lateness of his call, he told that his master had given him the dollar that he might, if he chose, go to the Horse Show; but that he preferred to give it to the orphans rather than to spend it on one night's pleasure for himself.

Similar instances might be multiplied; but these must suffice.

To one who asked Miss Mellick if she did not get worried with the anxiety of planning and working for so many, she replied, "No, not now. I used to be anxious and fretted, but now I just try to live in the Divine presence and trust God to do the work."

She is giving the children a good public school education. The eldest boy, one of the two who first came, is now in his sixteenth year. He did extremely well at the public school, and got, through a providential opening of his way, a free training in shorthand at the Commercial College, and is now employed as a stenographer in a city office. The other children as they grow up, will be put in the way of earning their living. Besides being trained to do all the work of the house, and to be kind and helpful, obedient and respectful, they are specially taught to fear God, to love the Redeemer, and to trust in Him. Six of them have avowedly given their young hearts and lives to the Lord Jesus, and entered into public communion with the Christian church. Everything they need, and every proper thing which they desire, whether it be great or small, is carried to the Lord in prayer. They expect their Father to give what they ask, if He sees it is to be for their good. They thank Him when He sends the gifts. They thank Him when He delays, or altogether withholds them. Emerson, in one of his essays, sneers at those "amiable parsons who believe in a pistareen-Providence, which, whenever the good man wants a dinner, makes that somebody shall knock at his door, and leave a half-dollar." Well, the theory of the universe which Christ taught us is, that, at the centre of the forces which govern human destiny, there is found not a cold inexorable Fate, nor a mechanism of dead Law, but the heart of a righteous and loving Father—One who wills not that one of His little ones should perish, and who numbers even the very hairs of their heads. Those who have fairly tried

this theory find it work as truly, and much more sweetly, than those who believe only in the reign of law. "According to our faith is it done unto us." With the merciful God shows Himself merciful; with an upright man He will show Himself upright; with the pure He will show Himself pure; and with the froward He will show Himself froward.

To return to our orphans; we may add that most of them are the children of poor parents. They have not had the fine culture and social advantages which many enjoy. Dainty persons of fine æsthetic taste, seeking "sweetness and light," may be disappointed at the Bethany Orphanage. Yet these children live as gently and happily together, and behave themselves quite as well as the same number would do in almost any other home in the City. When they receive more than they actually need, they are taught to share with others. Money given directly to the children, instead of being spent on luxuries like candy, is given over to those whose need is greater than their own. They contribute to the support of one of the famine children in India, and give about twelve dollars a year to other missions as well. On Christmas 1902 a friend, who wished to give them a turkey, found them abundantly supplied. He gave a dollar's worth of new five cent pieces to the children instead. On Miss Mellick's suggestion they cheerfully turned them over to the afflicted little ones in the Hospital for Incurable Children. Miss Mellick herself, when money is given her, invariably tithes it for the Lord. Yet the children do not lose by what they give away. They have quite as much candy given to them, as it is

good for them to receive, and more than falls to the lot of many in similar circumstances.

Miss Mellick is a plain, unpretending, simple-minded woman. She has been blessed with an equable temper, and good sound judgment* ; and she has learned to have almost unbounded faith in God. Some of those who know her would, in the practical difficulties of the common Christian life, as soon be guided by her advice as by that of a Doctor of Divinity. It seems good in the sight of our Father, the Lord of Heaven and earth, to reveal to babes things that are hidden from the wise and prudent. When fully separated from the world, raised above the distracting noises which hinder our catching the sound of the Master's voice, raised above the mists and shadows that cloud our vision of the unseen and the eternal, even humble Christians may have such communion with the Father of lights, that they see light in God's light ; and when they are asked for counsel, it is as if one "enquired at the oracle of God."

Faults and imperfections, of course, Miss Mellick has ; and even though sincere and upright she makes mistakes, which are noticed no doubt by herself, as well as by others. But she is certainly living very near to God. She dare not live otherwise. May God continue to make her and her orphanage a standing monument of His own faithfulness and Fatherly care. May the childlike trust of her and her little ones

*For fear of misunderstanding it may be well to say that Miss Mellick has no scruples about calling in medical advice for the children when needed. But she always "seeks to the Lord as well as to the physicians" and even before.

provoke many others also to "have faith in God."

"Trust in Him at all times; ye people pour out your heart before Him. God is a refuge for us."

"Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you."

For this little sketch the writer is wholly and solely responsible. It is issued entirely at his own suggestion and expense; though not of course without Miss Mellick's knowledge and consent. It is *not* issued as an appeal for contributions to her work; though the work is hampered, and made much more difficult for want of more room and larger means. It is issued as a testimony and illustration that God hears and answers believing prayer.

The writer rather dreads than desires any publicity which may mar the quietness and modesty with which the work has been carried on in the past. May it, even if enlarged, have the same character in the future.

"For God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."

Some may like to read Miss Mellick's favorite texts, on which she has leaned for strength and patience and consolation. They are such as these:

Prov. 3: 5-6—Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He will direct thy paths.

Gen. 26: 24—Fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee.

Phil. 4 : 19—My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Ps. 84 : 11—No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.

Ps. 34 : 22—None of them that trust Him shall be desolate.

Is. 55 : 8—My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.

Jer. 29 : 11—I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil.

2 Cor. 5 : 7—We walk by faith, not by sight.

Heb. 11 : 6—Without faith it is impossible to please Him.

Mk. 9 : 23—If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

Mk. 11 : 24—What things so ever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.

Ps. 10 : 14—Thou art the helper of the fatherless. *v.* 17—Thou wilt cause thine to hear, to judge the fatherless.

Phil. 4 : 4—Rejoice in the Lord always.

Rom. 8 : 28—All things work together for good to them that love God.

(These last two she found at times the hardest of all).

