

Lutheran Observer.

Unless with proofs of Holy Writ, or with manifest, clear and distinct principles and arguments, I am refuted and convinced, I can and will recant nothing.—Luther.

In Essentials, Unity; in Non-Essentials, Liberty; in all Things, Charity.

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WHOLE NO. 3644.

Poetry.

MY BIRTHDAY AT THREE-SCORE AND TEN AND FOUR.

BY JOEL SWARTZ, D. D.

O'er meadows mown and ripening corn,
I look through eyes, not dim'd with tears,
But with the mists of many years,
And bless the day that I was born,
And all the days that intervene
Between that and this evening scene.

I would not say, since I am old,
Because my strength and senses fail,
That life is like a thrice-told tale,—
With weary iteration told,—
But rather like the ripening year,
Whose fruits are gathered in with cheer.

Nor would I say that all those years,—
As seasons have appeared and gone,—
Have only glad rejoicings known,
But rather that, with toils and tears
And mingled smiles and hopes, have come
The sheaves brought in at "Harvest Home."

My rustling stalk is brown and sere;
It oft hath felt the keen plowshare,
Along its weedy rootlets tear,
And knows the reaper now is near;
The kindly sickle soon shall come,
And after that the "Harvest Home."

And shall I dread the sickle's edge,
More than I did the keen plowshare?
Is not the tiller's patient care,
At harvest time, the surest pledge
That he will kindly spare the grain
Which drank his sunshine and his rain?

Meanwhile, I drink life's cup of cheer;
The lapse of brook, the trill of bird,
If not, as once, so sharply heard,
Are still, as in my childhood, dear;
And childhood's laugh and thought of sage,
Are sweetened by my sober age.

But would I live my life again?
And would I, if I could, recall
My childhood, manhood, all in all,—
Without their tears, without their pain,—
Retrace the steps that I have gone?
No! life is better further on.

I ask not for a life of sense,
Of appetite for earthly food,—
Though, in their time and measure, good;
I have a longing, most intense,
For larger life of thought and love
And worship in the world above.

There are such heights and depths, I know,
Of what is faintly hinted here,
In that advanced, transcendent sphere,
To which the thoughtful long to go,
That I, sometimes, can scarcely wait
The call to that unseen estate.

How sweet to be at home with God!
To know his loved ones and my own,
Not dimly, but as I am known,
Who with me life's changed paths have trod,
But rest upon a happier shore,
Where care and age oppress no more.

Devon, Pa.

Saint Augustine! well hast thou said,
That of our vices we can frame
A ladder, if we will but tread
Beneath our feet each deed of shame!
—Longfellow.

Contributions.

A TIMELY TEXT.

BY THEODORE L. CUYLER, D. D.

"For the Lord God will help me. Therefore shall I not be confounded; therefore have I set my face like a flint; and I know that I shall not be ashamed." This is a timely text for every young man or woman who has just graduated from school or college, and is about entering on the battle of practical life. It has the ring of a bugle in it. Let every beginner in the only life worth living write it on his heart. It will do two things for him: it will cheer him when he gets discouraged; it will rebuke him when he gets puffed up with self-confidence and presumption.

The idea that any of us can ever get beyond the need of help is insane. The richest merchant becomes such by the help of his employees and his customers; the successful lawyer rises by the aid of his teachers, his "authorities," and his clients. Nobody succeeds in secular affairs who is such a fool as to care nothing for the good will and assistance of his neighbors. If entire independence of others is folly in things secular, in religion all attempted independence of divine aid is self-destruction. I have watched some presumptuous beginners in the Christian life whose idea was, "I will do it," but very soon, like Bunyan's pilgrim when he undertook to "show off" before Faithful, they are flat on the ground. The secret of the failure of more than one young Christian, yes and of more than one young minister, has been overweening self-confidence. A happy thing is it if failure chastises into humility and reliance on God. "He that trusteth his own heart is a fool."

This is a timely text to discouraged ministers. They are very abundant in these days. One is disheartened by the difficulty to gather and to hold a congregation. Another by the lack of good backing in his efforts to do the Master's work. Another is heart-sick over his thin, lifeless prayer-meetings. Another mourns over the scarcity of conversions. Whatever the cause of discouragement, there is but one resource, and that is to lay strong hold on God.

Our extremity is his opportunity. When a child of God honestly and fervently cries out, "Lord, I am weak; without thee I can do nothing; pity my weakness and come straightway to my help," then commonly the worst is over. The daylight is at hand. Trying times are these for the best of ministers. Increasing disrespect for the Sabbath, increasing worldliness, and the atmosphere charged with skepticism make faithful Gospel work no child's play. The lesson that we ministers are being taught is—in God's love, in God's strength, and in the direct power of the Holy Spirit is our only help. I don't believe that any faithful servant of his ever laid hold of duty with a sincere, humble, self-renouncing spirit and an earnest cry for help, and was left unheard and unblest.

This timely text—for it suits a vast many cases in life—settles three things. The first one is the true believer's security. The Lord will help me; there-

fore I shall not be confounded." The Hebrew word signifies—I shall not be put to rout or discomfited. He who has the Lord Jesus on his side and at his side can never be defeated. That Gibraltar has never been captured. "None shall pluck them out of my hands." Omnipotence said that! Satan knows it; why should not we?

The second result is steadfastness. "Therefore I have set my face like a flint." A whiffling, compromising type of politicians once went by the name of "dough-faces." But this text describes a fearless, steadfast, dependent on God as flint-faced. He is not afraid of a lash or a laugh, of a scoff or a scourge. If God be for him, what cares he who, or how many, may be against him?

The third blessing wrapped up in this precious passage is serenity of soul. "I shall never be ashamed." Paul was a wonderfully calm and composed man. He never worried, never turned purple in the lips, and never apologized for his plain, heart-searching truths. Neither should we. What a triple coat of mail this passage is; it gives us security, steadfastness and serenity of soul. It makes us safe, strong, humble-minded and peaceful. What a wealth of blessings! They are all assured to the person who trusts God as his or her almighty helper. This is a timely motto for every young man or woman who is entering on the practical business of life. It is a motto for new converts. It is a tonic for troubled ministers. It is a golden watchword for the walls of our prayer-rooms. Therefore let us come boldly to the throne of grace for help in every hour of need. The bell-rope of the prayer of faith reaches up to the everlasting Throne.

SUFFERING FOR THE GLORY OF GOD.

BY REV. GEORGE H. REEN.

[CONCLUSION.]

But yet the harder question presses, Is it necessary that Christian people suffer to win God glory from sinners? Again I reply, I dare not say that this is absolutely necessary. I can only say that it is God's way. I can tell you, too, that suffering for others' good is a principle that is universal. It is active in the material world, not less than in the realm of spirit.

"Life evermore is fed by death,
In earth and sea and sky,
And that a rose may breathe its breath,
Something must die."

See the mother fondly attending her sick child through busy days and dreary nights until her own strength is gone, if perchance she may lure it back to health. Suffering for another's good! Ah, the law of vicarious pain is operating everywhere. It even enters the individual life of each one of us, and makes the lower nature suffer for the good of the higher nature. For are we not commanded to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof so that the life of the Spirit may arise in us with greater fullness and power? And I can remind you further that Christ did it. He does not ask you to make a sacrifice greater than his own. He suffered for the good of others—gave up heaven, gave up comforts, gave up life itself, and for those who were his enemies. "Must Jesus bear the cross alone?" The Apostles did it. The Divine law of endurance included them. They too must suffer in order to establish the Church through which in all times men should be led to glorify God. Lazarus and his sisters, and the blind man, and the paralytic, were also called to the same service. You are only feeling the weight of a general rule, my friend, if you have a share in this work.

And mark the efficiency of the system. God was

verily glorified in the miracles performed upon the afflicted ones of Christ's day. They became his means of showing forth the power of God, of proving that he was God. When Lazarus came forth from his temporary tomb, "many of the Jews," writes John, "who came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him." Think of it! Christ's enemies turned into disciples! The old disciples also strengthened in their faith in him! It is not long after this that we hear some of the Savior's foes conspiring to put Lazarus to death also, "because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away and believed on Jesus." Oh, the power of a life to glorify God when it has been touched by the finger of Christ the Wonder-worker! Was not that service to the Lord worth the trouble it cost those three friends of his? Do you not think they were glad, when they understood it all, that they had been privileged to do so much for him? Could love be put to more profitable service?

Ah, my reader, if you are suffering from one of God's mysterious providences, then I congratulate you. I hail you as one highly honored. I could almost covet your holy mission. You are not unfortunate,—nay, far from it. You are greatly exalted. God has made it possible for you to give him glory in a most effective way. He has set you above many others in his service. He has made you his servant in a special sense. Perhaps you have prayed in times gone by that God would make you useful for him, and you wondered what your field would be, and you lamented that there seemed to be so little that you could do. Behold in your affliction the answer to your prayer. It has come in a garb that you expected not, but it has come surely and fully, nevertheless. It has come, perchance, in sudden and strange bereavement. It may be that the Lord has taken your loved ones from you even in the hour when you, like Mary and Martha, were asking him to spare them to you. And you have thought it strange that your petition was disregarded. Then hear Christ's words to the sisters, "It is for the glory of God."

Do you ask *how* you can give God glory by your sorrow? The answer is, just as the man born blind did with his affliction—by allowing the works of God to be manifested through it. This is your mission henceforth, my friend, to show to the world what Divine grace can do to sustain and comfort men and women in such trials as yours. All will know that nothing *earthly* can repair such rended hearts. Let the miracle of peace be performed upon you by Christ the Wonder-worker, and they who see will be made to fear and glorify God who imparteth such gifts to men. Your fellow-believers will be confirmed in their faith. Yea, and sinners away from Christ will be made to long for the fellowship of him who can so marvelously uphold. What if through your suffering new impulse should be given to the kingdom of Christ! What if because of your Divinely-given endurance your brethren should be made more trustful and more devoted to the Lord! What if through your manifestation of Christ's power to sustain many souls should be brought to him! Would not that be a work worth your sorrow? And is it not better that you, the friend of Christ, partaker of his consolation, should suffer for a while than that others should forever perish without Christ? Is it not a wise economy that calls you to suffer, you who can suffer safely, in the place of those who would else fall into eternal agony? And can you not now endure it cheerfully, patiently, even gladly, out of love for the dear Savior who freely did more than this for you?

This demand which is sometimes made upon us to suffer for the glory of God is *entirely consistent with his love for us as his children*. You may say, "Could he ask us to suffer for him if he loved us?" Nay, let