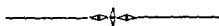


And, from the mountain's top of his exalted wit,
 Saw it himself and show'd us it.
 But life did never to one man allow
 Time to discover worlds and conquer too ;
 Nor can so short a line sufficient be
 To fathom the vast depths of Nature's sea.
 The work he did we ought t' admire,
 And were unjust if we should more require
 From his few years, divided 'twixt th' excess
 Of low affliction and high happiness.
 For who on things remote can fix his sight,
 That's always in a triumph or a fight?

WILLIAM COWAN.



ART. IV.—THE SCHOOL OF SICKNESS.

DOCTORS OF MEDICINE gain but little instruction from Scripture Commentators on subjects bearing upon their profession. Look at the technicality said to characterize the narrative of "the beloved Physician." How essentially "*post hoc*" is the inference. Set aside tradition and Church History, and who may fairly deduce, from that Evangelist's version of the Gospel, evidence of the Medical more than of the Painter calling, or indeed of either one or the other? But devout minds have worked up a picture within the shadowy outline of a name, and unreality is consequently portrayed.

Why is this?

An explanation presents itself readily.

Apart from knowledge philological—a clear elucidation of original text—it follows that the Cleric's exposition of Disease must rest on one of two bases: the intellectual grasp of a highly educated man, or on "second-hand" medical knowledge. The latter would ordinarily take the form of popular handbook; occasionally, perhaps, of more direct and less fallible source. True, an element far higher is to be reckoned, factor-age, however, not limited to but one order of the community. Be it as it may, the outcome hitherto has been unprofitable to laymen. An interpretation strained when *not* coloured by theological bias; an adaptation of end to predetermined lines—this is no infrequent outcome.

The antecedent training bears fruit either in subordination of the natural to the non-natural, or the converse. We speak of clergy as a body. The pious if fanatical layman, working also in a groove—it may be deeper and more remote from the fountain-head—stands at the other pole.

"Truth" on the subject that heads this article may be

approached from varied standpoint; yet only hopefully, when not thus handicapped. And the (possibly) too subjective thought-basis of Clergyman may be weighed against the (possibly) too objective outlook of Physician.

Exegesis up to recent times rested solely in the hands of the ministerial order. Not so now. Beside scientists of a certain class, who treat the Book with the same reverence—on the like footing—as they do mythical history, a blend, somewhat Apostolic, of the two callings which raise their followers into communion with a higher world has been founded, or rather, re-constructed. For union of the two professions finds precedent in bygone times, albeit linked with superstition on the one hand, empiricism on the other, and an undercurrent of venality which marred indisputable good in both. That union, dissevered in the days of Henry VIII.,¹ is again cemented by the blood of martyrdom. The Medical Missionary is recognised as *the* messenger of Christianity and of handmaid Civilization.

To what ends does sickness subserve? Integral part of the great problem which dates from the fall of Adam; physical suffering, through Disease, permeates, almost dominates, Scripture. It is an entity foremost in magnitude and comprehensiveness in relation of the Creator to the creature. Chiefest element in the crucible-body, during process, at times punitive or destructive, at times clarifying and conservative, it is the God-ordained manifestation wherein meet, indissolubly, the material and immaterial man.

Disease is typical of *the* great operation in him—the work of the Holy Spirit. Such process is symbolized in one word—Fire. And Fire, we know, is, in Bible metaphor, either instrument of purification or of destruction. The parallelism between soul and body sickness becomes more weighty and suggestive under each fresh discovery of Medical Science.²

In the Old Dispensation immunity from sickness and length of days are linked together with “milk and honey” as foretaste of recompense for a well-ordered life. But in the New comes the “much tribulation”—tribulation in which bodily suffering assumes a far deeper significance in relation to present and future. Fine gold is to be eliminated from dross and alloy in a furnace which, unlike that of Babylonian despot, shrivels up and consumes.

¹ By the formation of the Royal College of Physicians.

² Isa. i. 6. Take an illustration. In certain blood diseases Nature, so called, throws out the poison, and the patient recovers. The Scriptural axiom, “The blood is life,” is daily obtaining more literal fulfilment, as one grave malady after another is traced back to some organism hitherto unrecognised.

Disease is an entity dual in operation and issue, and so differs from other forms of suffering in which mind alone is concerned. It is a finger-post pointing downwards; a sermon ceaselessly calling us upwards.

In the Floral world Plants, through ingraft or certain conditions of forced culture, put forth new character. And often what is gained in outward beauty is lost in perfume, vitality, health. So, too, with the body under the pressure, the forcing of artificial life. New phases of disease—more—new maladies, indubitably appear. How far these are outcome of more rapid combustion in the human lamp; how far some new blend (so to speak) of morbid hereditariness, waits further light.

We are told on unquestionable authority¹ that one dire malady (which we will not name) is on the increase; that it threatens to rival in frequency, Consumption. Yet, as a whole, warfare against death is waged on better vantage-ground than formerly; waged successfully, for no fact is more patent than that of progressive longevity.² So, with phases of sickness new or old, mercifully come, *pari passu*, new means palliative or curative; nay, even the hope that ailments hitherto irremediable may be vanquished.

Increase of days and handmaid-progress in science may play a momentous part in the closing years of this dispensation, a part, too, not for good. Creature-exaltation attains climax, and then Disease in new appalling form harbingers the great Advent. Underlying Apocalypse, ground for such belief is discernible.

In unfallen man even associated with primeval happiness was there not a rudiment of corporeal suffering? Then, consequent on the fall, did such germ develope into actual toil, the sweat of the brow? And, at a later date, as outcome of further

¹ That of the Registrar-General.

² On the one hand, there is more arduous struggle for livelihood, keener competition, and proportionately greater expenditure of vital force; on the other, science, opening out new means for bodily conservation. On which side lies the balance—gain or loss to life? To the latter indubitably. Apart from the factorage above named, greater abstinence from alcohol must tell in favour of posterity.

Students of English history will have noticed the short lives, with few exceptions, of noted men in the Middle Ages. Take, *e.g.*, the reign of Henry VIII., as recorded by Froude. Fifty to sixty years was then "old age." But the women!—unhappy sex every way. Child-birth peril, food which a ploughman would now reject, and in sickness medicines equally repulsive and worthless. What wonder that they died young, and that such "old men" had three or four wives ere they too departed. A shrewd observation comes to us from a recent clerical writer who has studied men and manners. It is "that appetite kills more people than the want of it."

declension from God, evolution of Disease? We believe so. No slight clue to unravelment of Divine purpose, "through the flesh," starts from fundamental principle of this order. Following it we bring within the range of finite conjecture the origin of maladies; supersession, so to speak, of the natural, *i.e.*, death, through decay, typified in expiring lamp, by the more speedy, non-natural, messenger of Disease and its outcome, premature death. The date would be subsequent to the Flood; the proximate cause, marked accession of wickedness. So came termination of Methusaleh—flickering out, as ordinary process of resolution to earth again, and so the advent of sickness, and pain.

There is some ground for fixing the period. A passage in the Bible meets the case: it occurs in Genesis xi. Attempted erection of the Tower of Babel (defiant evidence of nascent Positivism!) we may well conceive to have been an act provocative in the extreme of Divine displeasure. Dispersion of mankind over the habitable earth would effectually work out the will of God in a twofold punishment of segregation, and generation of Disease. Soil, climate, conditions of life might well furnish ample causation.

Disease in Bible light bears, broadly speaking, twofold spiritual import:

- (1) Punitive; the natural, so to say,
- (2) Purifying; the supernatural character.

(Not inaptly do these words in material, literal sense, express a Physician's view of the great mass of cases.)

Three factorages are comprised. There is the consideration as to how far, *proprio motu*, Satan is permitted to assail, to sift man in the sieve of sickness; how far such trial is overruled and subordinated for good through the great Physician; how far the visitant comes direct from God's hand as actual gift, a boon manifest in the hereafter. In no part of Holy Writ may we see more profound teaching on these points than in the first two chapters of the Book of Job. What subtle deep knowledge of man by the Adversary is there disclosed! Affliction through loss of fortune, of fame, of family, as it befell the Patriarch so customarily does it visit us, in separate blow. And it is borne more or less resignedly, even apart from Divine aid. There is a "*vis medicatrix nature*" in relation alike to mind and to body. Beneath the surface is discernible a marked element of "Self": it is mercifully permitted, however at first glance repugnant be the thought.

These trials are, as it were, "Self" assailing *from without*. But how many can withstand that other "Self" from within? To it, step by step, the Accuser led Job. In it his art culminated,

and Faith was strained exceedingly.¹ That medium was suffering in the flesh—Disease. For Disease is surely the trial among trials—complex, reflex, reduplicative. The position is as unique as comprehensive. Even with relation to death through other media how different the footing! In battle, or by accident, we know that through excitement in the one case, unexpectedness in the other, the end may come almost without a pang. If the issue of event be doubtful, the star of Hope shines very brightly. How different the lot under wasting, painful malady, with the end, nearing day by day, ever looking us in the face!² The Soldier's courage is but as meteor to the sun, weighed against the fortitude of many a weaker vessel—Woman.

Direct punitive Disease as fiat of Divine judgment we see in plagues of Pharaoh, heralding destruction. Of the conditionally-punitive it is superfluous to speak. It runs through the Bible as, reverently, so to say, almost its very *raison d'être*. Whether for nation or to individual ever comes the merciful "If." As to the third aspect. Of the "Master" what may we say save the words of David and of Job,—“Such knowledge is too wonderful for me.” But from that of Christ's chiefest Apostle we may learn much. There are who hold that sickness must needs be always disciplinary, and inseparable from sin.³ In a fundamental sense (the fall), indisputably true of the latter. But of the former?

That it should come distinctively as messenger of love, dis-severed wholly from the judicial—as, in fact, token the highest of Divine favour—this is a rendering of the apocalyptic “as many as I love I chasten,” which (it may be urged) exceeds belief. What wider divergence can there be than between the strongest weapon in the armoury of Satan (Job i. and ii.) and the choicest gift from heaven? In discipline we can see

¹ Note analogy in threefold temptation of Messiah. Also how very much is implied by our Lord's answer to Peter, “Pity thyself.” St. Matt. xvi. 22 (margin).

² “Thou inevitable day,
When a voice to me shall say,
Thou must rise and come away.”

Archbishop Trench.

³ Sir Henry Taylor, speaking with the weight incident to a long life and much knowledge of mankind, offers a remark which may come as a glad surprise to many readers of his autobiography. He states it to be a fact well known to physicians that death is very generally painless. True, in some cases. Apparent suffering is occasionally but the automatic action of a clogging mechanism, consciousness and feeling having departed. In other cases, as far as may be gathered, it is not so. Some partial knowledge of the subject comes to us through the experience of individuals resuscitated after immersion and strangulation. (Since these words were penned, Sir Henry Taylor in death fulfilled his own words. He “fell asleep,” without warning, while supposed to be dozing after dinner.)

a needful distinction; in Providence also (John ix. 1, Luke xiii. 4), illustrative of the sovereignty of the potter over the vessel—the “*I Will.*” But in grace, free grace? Thus would some speak.

Yet history, biography, living experience, all tell us that some measure of this “more perfect way” of love *is* shown to the sufferer—*is* realized and reciprocated by him. The solace is proportionate to degree of severance from earth. If to love God for His attributes be (as it surely is) the highest aim, duty, and privilege of mankind, *then* to view Disease as sent (in love) by One who is *essentially* “Love”:—this, we say, implies possession by man of a reflex peace which far surpasses that derivable from mere resignation to the Divine Will. For it speaks of “a rest in love,” a glorifying of God in the fires, which is in harmony with that of martyr. As in death of the one, so, too, in the *life* of the other, that fear which has torment is, through grace, overcome. It presents a living epistle to the world. Paradoxically, it is a Self within a Self—*Christ*.

Coming to New Testament age; what do we see in days when the cup of national sin was full? In our Lord’s life-time it may be assumed that prediction of Moses as to sickness, Egyptian in severity, received fulfilment, and that disease abounded. Somewhat more light as to its variety comes to us then, yet, broadly, we see the forms of malady spoken of by the Law-giver.¹

“He went about doing good, healing all manner of diseases.” These words summarize this great feature in the Redeemer’s ministry. What proportion of the three years and a half was spent as Preacher, what as Physician? Alike from the Saviour’s own words as from evangelistic narrative, the Healer office predominated. Why, we can well conceive. It was the great objective, irrefutable proof of Messiahship. Cure of sickness precluded and then illustrated the Gospel-message with a power which no abstract declaration of “Truth” would convey to cavilling Pharisee or sceptic Sadducee.

The lesson to mankind in all after-times is not obscure. Of God-Man it may be (reverentially) said that He worked His work mainly through instrumentality of disease. The Christian priests of former ages had conception of the fact and wrought no small measure of good; the Medical Missioner of modern days still more realizes this aspect of the Master’s life.

¹ No metaphor of spiritual sickness, no profounder parallelism between corrupt soul and body exceeds in force that of Isaiah with reference to the Jew of his day. In that of Jesus were things better? “Fill ye up the measure of your iniquity,” is the answer.

Topography in Palestine is very suggestive to the Physician-traveller. The hill country with gorge through which sweeps keen wind, and the semi-tropical Jordan valley, each have a language of their own. The first-named, branching from the lofty plateau of Jerusalem, speaks of chest maladies incident to vicissitude of temperature. The other, from the tarn of Huron with marsh and miasm, to the volcanic shores of Lake Gennesaret indicates (broadly) fever and abdominal ailments. Sickness originally generated through impoverished blood, and perpetuated by intermarriage, would, of course, obtain everywhere; notably, leprosy.¹ As it appears to the writer, there is a ready explanation of the fact that our Lord's healing ministry was mainly associated with the vicinage of Galilee. The rank vegetation and enervating climate which characterize the site of the lake cities convey strongly an impression that fever, such as "laid low" Peter's mother-in-law, and consequent grave lesions of nerve centre, must have always had foothold there.

Was the healing art in Judæa materially advanced—more efficacious—in the time of our Lord than during the long antecedent period of Jewish history? It is doubtful—certainly as regards treatment of internal disorders. Granting that it were otherwise; that some ray of light from early Greek and contemporary Latin source had reached Palestine, the manner of life, poverty, food, dwellings, all that we now include in the word Sanitation, were antagonisms to recovery.

As to Therapeutics. Wine, certain spices, and vegetable oils, expressed juice of herbs, and exudation from trees (*i.e.*, balsams, as that of Gilead), ptisans—these for outward as well as inward use, would be employed.² Then instinct would prompt to rest, to abstention from food, and to free use of water—albeit such might then, as now, be potential for evil or for good! Not improbably the Israelite brought out of Egypt and retained some belief in astrology; in "times

¹ On much the same principle that a varied dietary is conducive to health, so too in higher and kindred sense may this be said of admixture of blood through varied races. Witness our own.

A feature in Palestine, of which he had never read, and which may interest readers (as it certainly did much the present writer), came before him when travelling there. From the Sea of Galilee and its shore, and also from the height above Nazareth (Luke iv. 29), a view quite Alpine is visible. Mount Hermon in snowy garb, sharply defined in the clear atmosphere, must have been ever before our blessed Lord.

² Treatment—*not* internal only, as popularly believed—of the injured traveller to Jericho by oil and wine would be in accord with received views of the day. Chaldean tradition is traceable through passages which figure prominently in ancient works on medicine.

and seasons" as influencing recovery. In any case Empiricism, virtually such, would have little to do with cure in comparison with simple *vis medicatrix nature*.

FREDERICK ROBINSON.



ART. V.—"THE SPIRITS IN PRISON."—WHO WERE THEY?

"He went and preached unto the spirits in prison."—1 PET. iii. 18-20.

"THIS difficult," sometimes "most difficult," passage—such are the terms we find constantly applied to this statement of St. Peter. "Mysterious" is often added, and with justice, for mysteriousness ever marks imperfect revelation. And the revelation here is scant to a considerable degree, and the mystery is in proportion to the imperfection. But mysteriousness and difficulty, though frequently confounded, are far from being identical, or even necessarily connected. So far as any revelation goes, there ought to be no difficulty of understanding and interpretation. In this case the mystery is great. We are not informed how our Lord went, where the prison is, how many the spirits, what the subject of the proclamation, how it was received, what its final effect as regards those spirits. We are told the nature and time of their sin—even disobedience in the days of Noah, implying some special act of disobedience; but not what was the nature of the imprisonment, and many other matters connected with it. Yes, the mystery is great, but where, within the limits of the narrative, the difficulty? Our Lord went to a certain prison where certain spirits were confined for a certain disobedience in the days of Noah, and He made a certain proclamation to them. There is no word here needing a dictionary to explain it, no involved grammatical sentence that an unlearned man could not unravel. There is a question of exegesis—whether "He" is to be understood of the Christ in His entirety, or of His disembodied soul only; whether His visit to the prison took place on the Saturday after His crucifixion, or subsequently to His resurrection. There is a controversy on this point, but it affords no difficulty as to the visit or its object. Whether He went before or after His resurrection it matters not, it is all the same. Is there, then, no difficulty of interpretation? There is; not in the narrative itself, but in the minds of interpreters. It is difficult to fill with other matter a vessel already full. And the minds of exegetes are filled full to overflowing with an assumption—a