

Healed to Serve

Anna W. Prosser Buffalo, NY June 30, 1880

I have often felt, since my recovery from a long and alarming illness, in answer to the "prayer of faith," that I should make a public statement of the facts in the case, both that God's name might be glorified by a recital of His wonderful dealing with me, and that some suffering ones who feel that there is nothing before them but a life of pain, may, through the blessing of the Holy Spirit, be led, as I have been to look unto Him, "Who healeth all our diseases." I trust, too, that there may be professing Christians, who have heretofore followed the Master but "afar off" and with weak and faltering faith, who may be quickened into a new life by its perusal. God grant that it may be so, for His dear name's sake!

There are many in this city who will re-call the long weary years of my illness. I believe it was partly caused by the worldly life of dissipation, into which I plunged at the age of eighteen, and which I bent every energy to maintain for several years, in spite of growing weakness and steady decline of nervous force, which warned me that the taper was burning low.

O, how bitterly do I regret those wasted years! It was one continual round of parties, operas and theatres throughout the winter season, only to be continued at some fashionable watering-place, when summer came. Self was my only thought, and self-gratification my only ambition. Truly, when I reflect upon that period of my life and compare it with the present, I can say, "The things I once loved, now I hate, and the things I hated, now I love."

Such a life is worse than useless; it is suicidal, and I cannot too strongly warn my young readers against it. The path appears to be a rosy one, but oh, the thorns lie underneath. At last I was forced to take my bed, and from that time, for a period of ten years, I was an invalid, suffering more in mind and body than any language of mine could describe.

But although, through the skill of an Indiana physician, I was, at the close of a year, enabled to walk about, I had learned so little by my sufferings that I, at once, by a great effort of will, returned to my former life of gaiety and folly, and, after a few months, the Lord in mercy, laid His correcting hand upon me, and once more I was confined to my bed.

The nervous system seemed to be completely prostrated ; there was a constant pressure, at times intense, in the back of my head, with great spinal irritation, which twice resulted in a serious attack of congestion of the brain, threatening my life. There was nervous dyspepsia in its worst form, attended by difficulties of the bowels and kidneys, which greatly increased my sufferings. There were other painful diseases to which I fell a victim at the beginning of my illness, and which medical aid never reached.

When I look back and consider the deplorable condition I was in, and how much I am able to endure today, I can only exclaim, "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in my eyes."

It is not too much to say that I suffered a *living death* with my head. Very little of the time I was able to read, or hear reading, or see any of my friends. One of my sisters came from a distant city several times to see me, but I was too ill to bear the excitement of seeing her.

The slightest noise caused my nerves to vibrate with the keenest agony; there could be no sweeping done within my hearing (which was marvelously acute) for many weeks—all sounds being magnified by my sensitive brain. Several friends and relatives sickened and died, and I did not learn of it until *years* had passed—no one daring to tell me, lest the shock should prove more than I could bear.

Not the least of my distress was the thought that I must die, and that no one would be the better for my having lived; that my life had been utterly selfish and sinful; that I had no treasure laid up in Heaven, and that I was wholly unprepared to enter there.

At last, after having been under the care of seven different physicians, and being advised by the one then attending me, to once more seek a change of air and treatment, I was carried away upon a mattress with little, if any, hope in the minds of my distracted parents, that I could live many weeks.

As for myself, I clung to life simply because I was afraid to die. After having received some benefit from magnetic treatment, and having been absent from home nearly three years, I was able to ride out, and walk about my room, but the relief was only temporary. It was then that, after having had in all nine physicians. The Lord led me to the dear, Christian woman, in the city of Rochester, who pointed me to Jesus, the Great Physician (glory be to His name!) as the remedy I needed for my sin-laden soul, and my suffering body. Oh, that I could find words to express what a revelation that was to me! "Oh, for ten thousand tongues to speak my great Redeemer's praise!" His wondrous love, His almighty power!

Dear reader, if you have never tasted that power, nor the faithfulness of His promises toward us who believe, may the Holy Spirit incline your heart to do so *now*. Like a sudden flood of sunlight in the gloomiest day, His heavenly light shone in upon my darkened soul, and, flinging myself in utter self-abasement at His feet, I cried, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean!" At that time I was, for the first time in my life, "hungering and thirsting after righteousness," and had felt that hungering from the first interview held with this saintly woman, whose very presence filled me with a deep awe and a sense of my great impurity and sinfulness. Many times during the morning Bible reading, at her house, I have trembled so violently from the powerful influence of the Holy Ghost, which fell upon us as she spoke, that I could scarcely retain my seat.

Coming thus in true penitence, humility and faith to Jesus, I found Him all that my soul could ever need, and then rejoicing in the forgiveness of my sins, I was led to look to Him for healing of the body also. I vowed to Him that if He would, in mercy, restore me to health, my life would be *wholly* consecrated to His service. He heard my cry and delivered me from my distresses. To Him "be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever! Amen."

I had been carried up and downstairs for nearly five years; in ten days I walked down and out into the street and back to my room with a little assistance. In a few weeks, not more than four, I could walk two miles without injury, and a short time after this was sent home, a wonder and an astonishment to all who knew me. It seemed to be God's plan with me to greatly try my faith by permitting some of my difficulties to remain, in spite of many prayers and efforts to overcome, and also by sending me many afflictions and sorrows, which well-nigh caused my frail bark to sink beneath the waves. But with the Captain of our salvation on board I felt that I should weather all the storms. During those times of fiery trial, when flesh and heart almost failed me, I was often comforted by sweet words of Scripture stealing in upon my mind so gently; Heavenly promises, reassuring and urging me on. From my heart I thank my Heavenly Father for the griefs and trials He has sent me, for each has brought its deep and valued lessons, and each has brought me nearer and nearer to Him. "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I have kept Thy law."

Within the past two years I have been still further strengthened by an interview with a minister of the Gospel, in the city of Brooklyn, who had been miraculously healed, almost instantly, while engaged in prayer with Dr Cullis, of Boston, whose great work of faith is widely known. He bade

me *believe* that the work of healing was wholly done in me, though I could not see it so, reminding me that "we walk by faith and not by sight."

While pondering over this, as I walked the streets some days after, very much mystified as to his meaning, and questioning his authority for saying so, the following verse from God's Word rushed through my mind with a meaning it had never before: "*That whatsoever things ye desire, when ye pray believe that ye receive them and ye shall have them!*" That is, *believe* though it be in total darkness, and light will surely come. Joshua had to take God's word for it that Jericho was his, and, in obedience to His command, gave the shout of victory before there was the least sign of it and *then the walls fell!*

I gladly grasped the above-named promise, feeling assured that the Lord had sent it for my encouragement, and was greatly strengthened thereby, and upon returning home was very soon led out into the Master's vineyard, in a most unexpected way to labor in a city mission work, a work which I hope never to be compelled to abandon. It brought me into many scenes of the most harrowing description, and surely was a work better calculated to test my nervous strength, than anything I could have possibly found. I could not have endured it without God's sustaining grace; neither could I ever have chosen

such a work for myself. It was clearly God's leading, and so I followed on.

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