

**SUNSHINE
IN SICKNESS**

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Sunshine in sickness by Anonymous

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MANY books have been written for the sick ; much has been said about their trials and duties, but I think few writers, except the author of "Sickness, its Trials and *Blessings*," have touched upon the latter. There are some blessings which would occur to every one as self-evident consequences of sickness : such as freedom from the snares of pleasure, and the temptations of the world ; having more leisure to devote to religious subjects than when immersed in the active duties of our vocation ; being allowed to bear a portion, however slight, of the Cross of our Divine Master : and al-

though only those who are habitually ill, know how greatly these blessings are often marred by the self-reproach that worldliness, impatience, and distaste to, and neglect of, holy things, follow us even into our sick-room ; yet they are real blessings which all must recognize, however partially overclouded. It is not difficult after a short and severe illness to feel deeply grateful to our Heavenly Father for our temporary withdrawal from the world, for the time given to us to look into ourselves, and for the greater understanding which sickness has given us of the blessings of health, of which we should never have felt the fulness, but for our late experience of its withdrawal. Many have borne testimony to the good that a casual fit of illness has worked in them, and with a better appreciation of the love of God, has come also a greater experience *of the love of our fellow-creatures ; we*

have felt their affection, forbearance, unselfishness, as we should never have done but for this visitation. All the beauties of creation, too, have come upon us with fresh admiration, after we have been for a time confined to the house; and we realize as we have never done before, how full this world is of beauty and of enjoyment: the grass in its freshness and glory, the flowers in their fragrance and beauty, revive us, and we long to lift up our hearts in joy and thankfulness with the "little birds" that "so sweetly and solemnly sing out their praises to Almighty God." The joy of such a return to health, and of seeing the faces we love best lit up with the delight of our recovery, one can fancy cheaply purchased by the sufferings of a few weeks.

It is more difficult to realize the sunshine shed upon a *life* of sickness, when hope is gone by, and there is no expectation of any outlet but death; and yet

much sunshine there undoubtedly is in every lot; and we should not be told so often as we are in Scripture to rejoice, "rejoice in the Lord alway," "and again I say rejoice," if joy and sunshine were denied to any. But the "light is in the clouds" for a time, "*now* men see it not." Why? Because we will not look for it; we shut our eyes or turn away from it, or veil it with a cloud of discontent and impatience, and so we do not see it; yet there it is, one day to shine out in all its brightness, if we do not render ourselves unable to see it then, by refusing to let its faintest beams rest upon us now.

As every physical power, every muscle of our bodies, becomes strengthened by use, and every faculty of our minds is sharpened by exercise; so will our powers of rejoicing and of discerning the bright light that shines upon us through the *clouds*, become greater as we use them.

Therefore would I entreat of my fellow-sufferers, of all long accustomed to sickness and suffering, with whom pain is the rule, and ease the exception of their days, diligently to seek out and cherish every gleam and ray of sunlight that it is given them to discern. Clouds overshadow their lot; it is better not to try to think otherwise, not to endeavour to work themselves up to such exaltation of feeling, as to believe themselves martyrs, and to glory in suffering, as though they were especially beloved *because* especially afflicted. This sort of spirit gives us, it is true, a glow of enthusiasm, and helps us to endure extreme pain with willingness, and even eagerness, but it does not bring forth in us the "perfect work" of patience; it does not help us to bear the daily and hourly trials of weakness, nervous irritation, and restlessness, which are far more depressing and overpowering, than the sharp pain which

brings with it the fictitious strength of excitement.

It is far better to look the trial steadily in the face, to understand where it presses most heavily, and to allow ourselves to feel humbled by our infirmities, and yet to feel so sure that every part and parcel of our burthen is laid upon us in the fullness of Divine Love, that it must be best for us; that we shall have strength given us to endure it; and that we may be content and cheerful under it, if only we will give up our will to His, and say from our inmost heart, "Thy Will be done." There is a gladness in this very resignation of ourselves into His hands, something like the happy fearlessness of a little child, safe in its mother's arms, whatever peril be at hand. It never gives people comfort to try and persuade them that such and such a pain or grief is not so bad as it seems to them; they *only turn away* with a sigh of disappoint-