

CHAPTER IX.

HEROISM IN WELL-DOING.

Main de femme, mais main de fer.—*French Proverb.*

Chi non soffre, non vince.—*Italian Proverb.*

He who tholes overcomes.—*Scotch Proverb.*

The path of duty in this world is the road to salvation in the next.—*Jewish Sage.*

For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.—*St. Paul.*

IN olden times virtue and valor were synonymous. Valor, the old Roman valor, was worth value. It was strength, force, available for noble purposes. He who best serves his fellow-creatures—who elevates them—who saves them—is the most valiant.

There is also an inward valor—of conscience, of honesty, of self-denial, of self-sacrifice, of daring to do the right in the face of the world's contumely. Its chief characteristic is great-heartedness. Endurance and energy are the dual soul of worth, the true valor.

The heroism whose theatre is the battle-field is not of the highest order. Amid the clash of bayonets, and the boom of cannon, men are incited to deeds of daring, and are ready to give their lives for the good of their country. All honor to them!

Women, whose province it seems to be to bear and forbear, are quite as capable of endurance as men. In the blood-stained stories of war there is none, perhaps, that more

enlists our hearts than that of the woman who put on male attire to follow her lover to the fight, stood by his side when he fell, and then braved death rather than be parted from his dead body. How many are there of these soldiers of the world, ever fighting the up-hill battle of existence, ever striving for a position and never attaining one; ever decimated by the artillery of necessity; beaten back, discomfited, all but hopeless and despairing, and yet still returning to the charge!

The Christian hero is not incited by any such deeds of daring as the soldier hero. The arena on which he acts is not that of aggression or strife, but of suffering and self-sacrifice. No stars glitter on his breast; no banners wave over him. And when he falls, as he often does, in the performance of his duty, he receives no nation's laurels, no pompous mournings, but only the silent dropping of tears over his grave.

Man is not made for fame, or glory, or success; but for something higher and greater than the world can give. "God hath given to man," says Jeremy Taylor, "a short time here upon earth, and yet upon this short time eternity depends. We must remember that we have many enemies to conquer, many evils to prevent, much danger to run through, many difficulties to be mastered, many necessities to be served, and much good to do."

Self-sacrifice is the key-note of Christianity. The best men and women have never been self-seekers. They have given themselves to others, without regard to glory or fame. They have found their best reward in the self-consciousness of duty performed. And yet many pass away without hearing the "well done," of those whom they have served. "Do unto others as ye would they should do unto you," is a command of infinite application. And yet it is not easy—at least for those who live in affluence or indifference—to carry out the obligation.

There is not an unnecessary thing in existence, could we but understand it; not one of our experiences of life, but is full of significance, could we but see it. Even misfortune is often the surest touchstone of human excellence.

The most celebrated poet of Germany has said "that he who has not eaten his bread in tears, who has not spent nights of pain weeping on his bed, does not yet know a heavenly power." When painful events occur, they are perhaps sent only to try and prove us. If we stand firm in our hour of trial, this firmness gives serenity to the mind, which always feels satisfaction in acting conformably to duty.

The opportunities of doing good come to all who work and will. The earnest spirit finds its way to the hearts of others. Patience and perseverance overcome all things. How many men, how many women too, volunteer to die without the applause of men. They give themselves up to visiting the poor; they nurse the sick, suffer for them, and take the infectious diseases of which they die. Many a life has thus been laid down because of duty and mercy. They had no reward except that of love. Sacrifice, borne not for self but for others, is always sacred.

Epimenedes, a philosopher and poet of Crete,* was called to Athens in order to stay the plague. He went, and succeeded in arresting the pestilence, but refused any other reward beyond the good-will of the Athenians in favor of the inhabitants of Gnossus, where he dwelt.

In olden times the plague was a frightful disease. People fled before it. They fled from each other. The plague-stricken were often left to die alone. Yet many noble and gentle men and women offered themselves up to stay the disease. About three centuries ago the plague broke out in the city of Milan. Cardinal Charles Borromeo, the archbishop, was then (1576) staying at Lodi. He at once volunteered to go to the infected place. His clergy advised him to remain where he was, and to wait until the disease had exhausted itself. He answered, "No! A bishop, whose duty it is to give his life for his flock, cannot abandon them in their time of peril." "Yes," they replied, "to stand by them is the higher course." "Well," he said, "is it not a bishop's duty to take the higher course?" And he went to Milan.

* Supposed to be alluded to by St. Paul in his Epistle to Titus 1:12.

The plague lasted about four months. During that time the Cardinal personally visited the sick, in their homes, in the hospitals, and everywhere. He watched over them, gave them food and medicine, and administered to them the last rites when dying. The example which he set was followed by his clergy, who ministered to the people with as much self-devotion as himself. And it was not until the last man died, and the last man recovered, that the good archbishop returned to his episcopal duties.

The Cardinal is entitled to consideration in another respect. He was one of the first to institute a Sunday-school for the education of the children of the poor. "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." Every good work could be done on that day, as well as on every other day. The Cardinal called about him the children from the streets into Milan Cathedral on Sunday afternoons, and taught them to read and write. They brought with them their copy-books and slates, on which to take down his instructions. His priests helped him, and the institution became popular. Three hundred years have passed, and Cardinal Borromeo's Sunday-school is still continued. In the spring of 1879 the writer of these words saw the children collecting in the cathedral, with their slates and books, to receive their Sunday-school instruction.

The Cardinal spent all his revenue in building schools and colleges, and in works of charity and mercy. Wickedness was rife in his day, and he did what he could to abate it. He began with his own class. He endeavored to enforce a reform of the clergy, especially of the Monastic orders. He labored to introduce better modes of life into the order of the Umilitati, who gave much cause for scandal by the licentiousness of their conduct. They thought the Cardinal equally scandalous by teaching poor children to read in the great cathedral. He was held to be a desecrator of the Sabbath, the sanctuary, and the priesthood.* His Sunday-school was thought to be

* "And to-day," says an American author, "if any man tries to do Sunday-school work in that broad and large way which embraces

a "dangerous innovation." The Umilitati hired a man to shoot the Cardinal while at the altar. At the moment the choir was singing the verse, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither be ye afraid," the assassin fired point blank at the Cardinal with an arquebus. The bullet struck him on the back, but the silken and embroidered cape which he wore warding it off, and the bullet dropped to the ground. The Cardinal was brave and resolute. While all around him were in consternation, he himself continued silent in prayer.

To return to the plague. The disease repeatedly visited this country, at a time when the people were worst fed, and when the conditions of health were completely disregarded. It proved most fatal in London, where the streets were narrow, foul, ill-ventilated, and badly supplied with water. Its last appearance was in 1665; it carried off 100,000 persons, when the population of London was not one sixth of what it is now. It extended from London into the country. Though most people fled from the disease, there were many instances of noble self-devotion. Bishop Morton, of York, was one of these. He thought nothing of himself, but only of his flock. A pest-house or hospital was erected for the accommodation of the poorest. They were taken from their wretched homes, and carefully tended. Though it was difficult to find attendants, the bishop was always there. Like a soldier, he stood by his post. When food was wanted he rode out to his farm in the country and brought sacks of provisions on his horse for their use. He would not suffer his servants to run the risk which he himself ran; and not only saddled and unsaddled his horse, but had a private door made by which he could pass in and

the whole life of a child, and which is the only practical and successful way of doing the work as Christ did it, he is met with denunciations. Let him, for instance, try to stem the tide of evil literature by giving good, healthy, secular books from his library, or let him try to conquer vagrancy by having an employment committee in his school and immediately the protectors of the Sabbath, and the defenders of Scripture study, are aroused. For the Pharisees have never yet wanted a man to stand before the Lord in any generation. Brethren of the Holy Bones, will your obstructive race never be extinct!"

out without mixing with the people of the farm. Thus the plague was confined to York itself. The bishop was a self-denying, generous, and thoroughly good man. When his revenues were increased he expended all in charity, in hospitality, and in promoting every good work. His life was one entire act of sincere piety and Christian benevolence.

In London and Sydenham most of the doctors fled; but some self-denying men remained. Among these was Dr. Hodges, who stuck to his post. He continued in unremitting attendance upon the sick. He did not derive any advantage from his self-denying labors, except the approval of his own conscience. He fell into reduced circumstances, was confined in Ludgate prison for debt, and died there in 1688. He left the best account of the last visit of the plague.*

From London, as we have said, the disease extended to the country. In many remote country spots places are pointed out in which, it is said, "they buried the plague." For instance, at the remote village of Eyam, in Derbyshire, a tailor received a box of clothes from London. While airing them at a fire he was seized with sickness, and died of plague on the fourth day. The disease spread. The inhabitants, only 350 in number, contemplated a general exodus; but this was prevented by the heroism of the rector, the Rev. William Mompesson. He urged upon the people that they would spread the disease far and wide, and they remained. He sent away his children, and wished to send away his delicate wife; but she remained by the side of her husband.

Mr. Mompesson determined to isolate the village, so that the plague should not extend into the surrounding districts. The Earl of Devonshire contributed all that was necessary—including food, medicine, and other necessaries. In order not to bring the people together in the church, he held the

* The best-known of these accounts is that which was written by Defoe, and published in 1722, being derived, to all appearance, from authentic journals and public and private records; but the best is "*Λοιμολογία, sive Pestis nuperæ apud Populum Londinensium, grassantis Narratio Historica*," by Dr. Hodges, which was published in 1672, and was translated into English by Dr. John Quincy in 1720.

services in the open air. He chose a rock in the valley for his reading-desk, and the people arranged themselves on the green slope opposite, so that he was clearly heard.

The ravages of the plague continued for seven months. The congregation became less and less each time that it met. The rector and his wife were constantly among the sick, tending, nursing, and feeding them. At length the wife sickened with plague, and in her weak state she rapidly sank. She was buried, and the rector said over her grave, as he had done over so many of his parishioners, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord: even so saith the Spirit; for they rest from their labors." The rector was ready to die, but he lived on in hope. Four fifths of the inhabitants died, and were interred in a healthy hill above the village. "I may truly say," he said in a letter, "that our town has become a Golgotha, a place of skulls. . . . There have been seventy-six families visited within my parish, out of which died 295 persons." Mr. Mompesson himself lived to a good old age. He was offered the Deanery of Lincoln, but he declined it. He preferred to remain among his parishioners, and near the grave of his beloved wife. He died in 1708.

Strange to say, some fifty years later, when some laboring men were digging near the place where "the plague had been buried," they came upon some linen, no doubt connected with the graves of the dead, when they were immediately stricken by typhus fever. Three of the men died, but the contagion spread through the village, and seventy persons were carried off. The typhus seems to be the survival of the plague, and many are the towns of England where this terrible disease strikes off its thousands yearly.

The author remembers, while living at Leeds thirty-three years ago, an outbreak of typhus fever. It began in the poorest parts of the town, and spread to the richer quarters. In one yard twenty-eight persons had the fever in seven houses, three of which were without beds. It was the same in other yards and buildings. In one house, in which twelve had typhus, there was not a single bed. The House of Recovery and the Fever Hospital were completely full.

A temporary wooden shed for an hospital was erected, and a mill was set apart for the reception of fever patients.

Dr. Hook, then Vicar of Leeds, and the Rev. G. Hills (afterward Bishop of Columbia), visited these places daily. They administered every comfort and assistance in their power. The Catholic priests were most devoted. When the plague of typhus broke out they went at once to minister to the poor. Into the densest pestilential abodes, where to breathe the poisoned air was death, they went fearlessly and piously. They were found at the bedsteads of the dying and the newly dead. No dangers daunted their resolute hearts. They saw death before them, but they feared him not. They caught the pestilence, and one by one they sickened and died. The Rev. Henry Walmsley, senior Catholic priest, first died. On the following day his junior died; he had been in Leeds only three weeks. Others pressed into the breach, as if a siege were to be won. They earnestly pleaded that they should be allowed to occupy the post of danger. The successor of Mr. Walmsley next fell a victim. Two others died, making five in all. A simple monument was erected to their memory, as men "who fell victims to fever in discharge of their sacred duties in 1847."

In addition to these, a curate of the parish church died from the same cause. A gentleman well known for his efforts in the cause of temperance was carried off. Two of the town's surgeons were attacked, and one of them died. In all, 400 persons were smitten by the plague. Surgeons and medical men are always in contact with diseases, no matter how infectious. These men brave death in all its aspects, often without the slightest hope of reward. Wherever they are called they go, unshrinkingly doing their duty, sometimes even unthanked. They spend and are spent, labor and toil, till their strength fails and their heart sickens; and then the fever fastens on them and they are carried off. Heroes such as these pass silently through life, and fame never reaches them. The greatest heroes of all are men whom the world knows not of.

Surgeons have done their duty on the field as well as in the dwellings of the poor. They have gone out under fire,

and brought back the wounded soldiers to be dressed and cared for. The French surgeon Larrey was quite a hero in this respect. During the retreat from Moscow he was seen performing an operation literally under the fire of the enemy. He had only a camp cloak to protect the patient. It was held over him in the manner of an awning to protect him during the falling snow. In another case, which happened on the burning sands of Egypt, the dashing little surgeon showed a similar ardor. An engagement with the English had just occurred, and among the wounded was General Silly, whose knee was ground by a bullet. Larry, perceiving that fatal results might ensue unless the limb was amputated at once, proposed amputation. The general consented to the operation, which was performed under the enemy's fire in the space of three minutes. But lo! the English cavalry were approaching. What was then to become of the French surgeon and his dear patient? "I had scarce time," said Larrey, "to place the wounded officer on my shoulders and to carry him rapidly away toward our army, which was in full retreat. I spied a series of ditches, some of them planted with caper bushes, across which I passed, while the cavalry were obliged to go by a more circuitous route in that intersected country. Thus I had the happiness to reach the rearguard of our army before this corps of dragoons. At length I arrived with this honorably wounded officer at Alexandria, where I completed his cure."

Here is another hero. Doctor Salsdorf, Saxon surgeon to Prince Christian, had his leg shattered by a shell at the beginning of the battle of Wagram. While laid on the ground he saw, about fifteen paces from him, M. de Kerbourg, the aide-de-camp, who, struck by a bullet, had fallen and was vomiting blood. The surgeon saw that the officer must speedily die unless promptly helped. He summoned together all his power, dragged himself along the ground until he approached the officer, bled him, and saved his life. De Kerbourg could not embrace his benefactor. The wounded doctor was removed to Vienna, but he was so much exhausted that he only survived four days after the amputation of his leg.

On the advance of an army it is usual to bring up the wagons in the rear for the accommodation of the wounded. When the men fall they are carried back to the surgeon to be attended to. If the army is driven back, the surgeons and the wounded have to fly, or be taken prisoners. On the occasion of the battle of the Alma the Russians fled, and the British and French followed. A large number of wounded men had been left. Several hundred Russians were brought to the eastern part of the field, where they were laid down in rows on a sheltered spot of ground near the river.

Happily there was a surgeon at headquarters whose sense of honor and duty was supported by a strong will, by resistless energy, and by a soundness of judgment and command of temper, rarely united with great activity. This was Dr. Thompson, of the 44th Regiment. Though the country was abandoned by the Russians, he succeeded in getting 400 pounds of biscuit, and the number of hands needed to sustain him in his undertaking. He immediately had the wounded fed, for they had had no sustenance during twenty-four hours. Then he attended to the dressing of their wounds. This occupied him from seven in the evening until half past eleven at night.

By this time the soldiers had left to carry the English wounded back to the ships at Eupatoria. And then Dr. Thompson and his servant, John McGrath, remained among the Russian wounded. They remained there for three days and three nights alone, amid the scorching sun by day, and the steel-cold stars by night. At length the opportunity occurred for embarking the Russians, and sending them to a Russian port under a flag of truce. "When at length," says Mr. Kinglake, "on the morning of the 26th, Captain Lushington, of the *Albion*, came up from the shore and discovered his two fellow-countrymen at their dismal post of duty, he was filled with admiration at their fortitude, and with sympathy for what they had endured."*

In like manner Dr. Kay, the surgeon of the hospital at

* Kinglake's "Crimea," iii. 334.

Benares, during the Indian Mutiny, stood by his post at the risk of his life, for the enemy were advancing to destroy him as well as his suffering patients. Every one remembers the dreadful events at Cawnpore, where every one perished, to the last man, the last woman, and the last child. Yet the British held out to the end, under the withering fire of the mutinous Sepoys. "It is hard to believe," says Mr. Collier, of New York, "any man, as a rule, more empty of what we call religion, than the common soldier. His whole life, poor fellow! makes it very hard for him to have any sense of it, and he has very little. But it has come out, since the great Sepoy Rebellion in India, that numbers of these men in the English army, were offered the alternative of renouncing the Christian religion and embracing that of the rebels, or being murdered by all the horrible ways that the hate and rage of the heathen can invent. It is believed that they died to a man; not one instance as yet has come to light of any common soldier giving way. . . . He was a man belonging to the Christian side, and the pincers could not tear that simple manliness out of his heart, or the fire burn it out. . . . And so there may be manliness where there is little grace, or if by grace you mean that gracious thing, a pure and holy life, and a conscious religion."

And here let us mention the self-devotion of two non-commissioned officers of the 70th Regiment, during the recent outbreak of cholera at Moulton. In the absence of women they nursed the sick and the dying. They worked day and night in the cholera hospital. Corporal Derbyshire at last broke down from sheer fatigue, but his place was supplied by others. The other non-commissioned officer, Corporal Hopper, volunteered for hospital duty at Topah, where he earned the gratitude of both the medical and military authorities. The surgeons were always at their task in both places, braving death at every moment. When the commander-in-chief visited Moulton, shortly after, he publicly thanked Derbyshire and Hopper in the midst of their admiring comrades.

But the same quality is sometimes displayed amid the fire of shot and shell. At the siege of Cadiz by the French in

1812 men and women were killed in the streets, at the windows, and in the recesses of their houses. When a shell was thrown by the enemy, a single toll of the great bell was the signal for the inhabitants to be on their guard. One day a solemn toll was heard in signal of a shell. That very shell fell furiously on the bell and shivered it to atoms. The monk whose duty it was to sound it went very coolly and tolled the other bell. The good man had conquered the fear of death.

But a singular act of bravery on the part of a woman was displayed during the same siege. Matagorda was a small outlying fort without a ditch or bomb-proof. Within this fort 140 English troops were stationed, for the purpose of impeding the completion of the French works. A Spanish seventy four and an armed flotilla co-operated in the defence, but a hitherto masked battery opened upon the ships, and, after inundating them with hot shot, drove them for shelter to Cadiz harbor. Forty-eight guns and mortars of the largest size concentrated their fire upon the little fort. The feeble parapet at once vanished before the crashing flight of shot and shell, leaving only the naked rampart and the undaunted hearts of the garrison. For thirty hours this tempest lasted; and now occurs the anecdote of the woman of Matagorda.

A sergeant's wife, named Retson, was in a casemate nursing a wounded man. The patient was thirsty, and wanted something to drink. She called to a drummer boy, and asked him to go to the well and fetch a pail of water. The boy hesitated, because he knew that the well was raked by the shot and shell of the enemy. She snatched the bucket from his hand and went herself to the well. She braved the terrible cannonade, went down to the well, filled the bucket with water, and, though a shot cut the cord from her hand, she recovered it, went back with the water for her patient, and fulfilled her mission.

The shot fell upon the doomed fort thick and close. A staff bearing the Spanish flag was cut down six times in an hour. At length Sir Thomas Graham (afterward Lord Lynedoch), finding the defence impracticable, sent a detach-

ment of boats to carry off the survivors. A bastion was blown up under the direction of Major Lefebre. But he also fell, the last man who wetted with his blood the ruins thus abandoned. The boats were then filled, and the men returned to Cadiz. They were accompanied by the heroic woman of Matagorda.

Can any one believe that women can undertake to nurse soldiers in time of war? And yet it is done bravely and nobly. Nurses used to be taken from the same class as ordinary domestic servants. It was not until Miss Nightingale, by her noble devotion to the care of the sick and wounded, had made for herself an honored place in history, that people began to realize that nursing was a thing to be learned—that it required intelligence, willingness, and fitness, as well as charity, affection, and love. "It has been said and written scores of times," says Miss Nightingale, "that every woman makes a good nurse. I believe, on the contrary, that the elements of nursing are all but unknown."

But how came it that she devoted herself to the profession of nursing? Simply from a feeling of love and duty. She need never have devoted herself to so trying and disagreeable an occupation. She was an accomplished young lady, possessing abundant means. She was happy at home, a general favorite, and the centre of an admiring circle. She was blessed with everything that might have made social and domestic life precious. But she abjured all such considerations, and preferred to tread the one path that leads to suffering and sorrow. She had always a yearning affection for her kind. She taught in the schools, she visited the poor, and, when they were sick, she fed and nursed them. It was in a little corner of England that she lived and worked—Embley in Hampshire; but one can do as much good work in secret as in the light of day.

The gay world opened before her. She might have done what other young ladies do in town.* But her heart led

* The Bishop of Manchester, preaching at Oswestry, read a letter from a young lady, giving him the following account of her day, and asking him whether there was any time in it for Christian work:

her elsewhere. She took an interest in the suffering, the lost, and the downtrodden. She visited the hospitals, the jails, and the reformatory institutions. While others were spending delightful holidays in Switzerland or Scotland, or by the seashore, she was engaged in a German nursing school or in a German hospital. She began at the beginning. She learned the use of the washing cloth, the scrubbing brush, and the duster; and she proceeded by degrees to learn the art of nursing. For three months she continued in daily and nightly attendance on the sick, and thus accumulated a considerable experience in the duties and labors of the hospital ward.

On Miss Nightingale's return to England she continued her labors. The Hospital for Sick Governesses was about to fail for want of proper management, and she undertook its care. She denied herself the affection of her home, and the fresh breath of the country air, to devote herself to the dreary hospital in Harley Street, where she gave her help, time, and means to the nursing of her sick sisters. Though the institution was saved, her health began to fail under the heavy pressure, and she betook herself for a time to the health-giving breezes of Hampshire.

But a new cry arose for help. The Crimean War was raging. There was a great want of skilled nurses. The wounded soldiers were lying at the hospitals on the Bosphorus almost uncared for. She obeyed her noble impulses, and at once went to their help. She embarked in a ship

"We breakfast at ten. Breakfast occupies the best part of an hour, during which we read our letters and pick up Society news in the paper. After that we have to go and answer our letters, and my mother expects me to write her notes of invitation, or to reply to such. Then I have to go into the conservatory and feed the canaries and parrots, and cut off the dead leaves and faded flowers from the plants. Then it is time to dress for lunch, and at two o'clock we lunch. At three my mother likes me to go with her when she makes her calls, and we then come home to a five o'clock tea, when some friends drop in. After that we get ready to take our drive in the park, and then we go home to dinner, and after dinner we go to the theatre or the opera, and then, when we get home, I am so dreadfully tired that I do not know what to do."