

Have you had the influenza? / By the author of "Happiness and misery."

Contributors

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HAVE YOU HAD THE INFLUENZA?

HAVE you had the Influenza, my friend? To this question it is most likely you must answer Yes; for this complaint has gone through the length and breadth of the land. It has entered the cottage of the poor, and the mansion of the rich; it has affected the infant in the cradle, the young man in his strength, and the aged in his feebleness. Most persons have suffered by it; some slightly, some severely, and some have been brought by it to the very brink of the grave. Few have altogether escaped its effects. You may, friend, have had some share in this visitation; allow me to ask you, have you profited by the warning?

How did this complaint find you? It may be that you were living in open sin; living like a heathen while you called yourself a Christian. It found you a drunkard, an adulterer, a liar, a sabbath-breaker, a blasphemer. You were living as if there were no God in the world. You were following your own vicious and ungodly inclinations, and going headlong to hell. You were saying perhaps in your heart, like the sinner described in Psalm x. 11, "God hath forgotten; he hideth his face, he will never see it." But God *did* see you. He was willing to give you one more warning, though you had disregarded so many. He saw you on the broad and downward

path that leadeth to destruction, and he sent a gentle stroke to check your mad career. He did not, as he justly might have done, strike you dead in a moment, and send you down into the bottomless pit, with all your unrepented-of, unpardoned sins upon your head. Neither did he send a dreadful pestilence upon you like the Cholera, which should rack your body with agonizing pain and madden your brain with strong delirium. He did not do this. He laid his hand upon you, but it was lightly and tenderly. He made his voice to be heard, but it was a still small voice of mercy. He sent you pain and sickness, but not unto death.

Oh! poor sinner, has not the Lord dealt graciously with you? How merciful that he should send you one more warning, and that so gentle a one! Have you considered this? Have you profited by the warning? Have you been led by the goodness of God to repentance for your sins, and to an earnest seeking of the pardon and grace of him who has spared you thus long! Remember that this Influenza *may* be your last warning. Your next illness may be so severe, so sudden, as to allow you no opportunity for repentance; or you may have no other illness, but in a moment may be called from a state of health and strength, to give an account of yourself at the bar of God's justice. Then will it be too late to call for mercy. Then the unsullied majesty of God will demand your everlasting punishment. Then will you experience the awful truth of the words recorded in Prov. i. 24—31, "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out

my hand, and no man regarded ; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof : I also will laugh at your calamity ; and I will mock when your fear cometh ; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind ; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer ; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me : for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord ; they would have none of my counsel ; they despised all my reproof : *therefore* shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices."

You see there will be a time when it will be too late to turn and repent. Oh ! be persuaded to turn *now* before your day of grace is past. It is not yet too late—God still waiteth to be gracious. He has provided an atonement for your sins. He has given his Son to die for you. He will refuse no earnest prayer that is offered up in the name of Jesus. Oh seek him *now*, for "behold, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." "Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, for why *will* you die." "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord," as recorded in the 1st chapter of Isaiah, "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." These are some of God's gracious revelations. They are addressed to you, poor sinner. Yes, even to you, whose sins are so many and so great. You who have been a drunkard, an adulterer, a liar, a Sabbath-breaker, a blasphe-

mer. The Lord will not cast out any that come to him. He has promised, and who can hinder the Lord from keeping his promise? Not the devil himself; not all the powers of darkness combined together. But what has God promised? Look at John vi. 37: they are the Lord's own words, and they are for you, poor sinner, if you will receive them: "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." In no wise—what! if he be the most wicked wretch that ever lived. Yes; to the most wicked, Jesus says, if he comes unto me I will not cast him out. Oh! my friend, will you not come?—will you turn away? Oh! come unto him; fall low on your knees and cry aloud for mercy. Ask God to fulfil his own promises: He cannot deny you—He cannot break his word. Only come unto him in fervent prayer, and you will receive a free and full pardon for all your offences. But oh! if you will not come—if you love your sins better than your Saviour—if you *will* perish—your blood be upon your own head. You have had your warning and you despised it. You have seen your neighbours, and it may be your own relatives carried to the grave, yet you will not lay it to heart. While hundreds of your fellow creatures have been swept into eternity, you have been spared. Yet neither their death nor your own preservation—neither the judgments nor the mercy of God—will move you to flee from the wrath to come. Are you yet resolved to fight against God? Will you still go on in sin? Oh! then you must abide the consequences, and very fearful they will be: your portion must be in that dreadful place where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.

But this little book is not meant only for openly wicked: it is intended to convey a word of exhortation to those, whose outward conduct is decent and respectable. You too have had a warning from God. This complaint has reached your dwelling. It is not, you see, only the openly profane to whom God sends a warning. Though your conduct is far better than theirs, it may be that you are no nearer to the kingdom of Heaven. Oh! it is a solemn question, "Are you ready for death?" This complaint is a call to you to prepare. Your time to leave the world may soon come—are you ready? You must stand before God's judgment seat. It will avail you nothing in that awful hour, to say, "Lord I have led a better life than my neighbours, I have wronged no one, I have been kind and charitable to those about me, I have been regular in my attendance at church, I have not altogether neglected the duties of religion in private." If you have nothing better to plead than this in your defence, you will share the fate of the open sinner, and hear the Judge pronounce your doom: "depart ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." Does this seem hard? By no means. Has not God a right to do what he will with his own? Salvation belongeth unto the Lord. Is he not free to bestow it in his own way? He has declared that he will not give it to any but those, who come unto him by his Son Jesus Christ. He has declared, (Acts iv. 12), that "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Jesus is "the way," and the

only way. If we are trying to get to heaven by any other way—by trusting to our own works, we are miserably deceived, and will be as miserably disappointed. If we tread under foot the Son of God, and count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing; if we fancy we can do without the bloodshedding of Jesus, if we act as though we thought his death upon the cross an unnecessary thing, then there remaineth for us nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.

The whole tenor of the Bible goes to prove that there is no salvation out of Christ. Let me ask you, have you obtained an interest in the covenant of grace? Do you belong to Christ? Have you any well-founded hope that you belong to him? Remember that the outward decency of your conduct, if it did not spring from fervent love to God is no evidence of your being a disciple of Jesus. You would perhaps have done as well, if you had never heard his name. You have acted from worldly motives and for worldly purposes. Such conduct will never satisfy him, who “searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men;” “who requireth truth in the inward parts,” who says, “my son, give *me* thine heart.” Think you, that the omniscient God will be satisfied with you because you have avoided gross immoralities, if you have never yielded him that fervent love, that cheerful delighting in his service, which as a kind and tender father he has a right to expect? Is it nothing, that you have slighted the love of a dying Saviour? Is it nothing, that you have consulted your own

ease, your own pleasure, and disregarded his glory? Poor mistaken sinner! You have the *form* of godliness, but you deny the power thereof. You have a name to live, but are counted dead before God. You say peace, peace, to yourself, but destruction is ready to come upon you. You think yourself safe—and you are on the very brink of perdition. Awake, ere it be too late. Lay to heart the gentle warning which you have had. Think of God's mercy in dealing so tenderly with you. Let not this call to repentance be in vain. Arise and look about you. See where you stand. Examine your heart—compare it with God's law. Thank God for giving you time to do this. Thank him for his mercy in sparing you, when so many have been cut off on the right hand and on the left. Delay not one hour to seek an interest in Christ. The harlot and the publican can enter into the kingdom of heaven, when cleansed by the blood of Jesus. So can the formalist and the Pharisee: the open sinner and the secret sinner can alike be saved, if they come unto God by Jesus Christ. But *neither* of them can be saved, if they will not come unto him. There is no other way. Oh! do not trust to your own works, they may look very fair in your own eyes, and in the eyes of the world. In God's sight they are hateful—loathsome. *He* will not approve them, for they spring only from selfish motives. He will not reward them, for they deserve nothing at his hand but judgment.

And now my friend I implore you, as in God's sight, who knows the heart both of writer and reader

—I implore you, do not go on in sin. Do not live as if God had not sent you this warning. It is not without a purpose that God has sent this disease from one end of the kingdom to the other. It is that the “inhabitants of the land may learn righteousness.” If you will not learn, remember that it is said in Prov. xxix. i., “He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”

I must now add a few words to quite another class of persons, to those who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. My dear brethren, or my dear sisters in the Lord, has this complaint affected you too? Yes, you are not exempted from suffering here. You are at present in a strange land, away from that *home* prepared for you, where sickness and death cannot follow you. While in the flesh you expect to have your share of suffering, for the servant is not above his Master. You know by whom this illness has been sent. You know that it is all in very faithfulness he causes you to be afflicted. The Lord chastens his people, that they may be “partakers of his holiness.” That he may wean their souls from every thing earthy, that he may quicken their pace towards heaven. God has many purposes in afflicting his people, but they are *all* gracious.

You, my Christian friend, will not be offended when I ask, have you profited by this gentle chastening? I say *you* will not be offended, because you desire to have every help towards discovering the evils of your own heart, that you may bring them to him who alone can cure them all. How did this sickness find

you? Were you walking closely with God? Were you delighting yourself in his service? Were you diligently seeking his glory and the salvation of perishing sinners? Were you laying out yourself mind and body in the work of the Lord? Were you rejoicing in the light of his countenance? Were you adorning the doctrine of Christ and walking worthy of your high calling? Oh! how do the Lord's people require to be stirred up, lest they "sit at ease in Zion," and neglect their Master's work. The Lord has been speaking loudly, yet tenderly to his people. This universal sickness has been as a voice to them, saying "Work while it is called to-day, for the night cometh when no man can work." The time is short—the work is great—the labourers are few. It behoves Christians to be up and doing; "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might." The Lord is at hand. Let Christians be excited to run with more diligence the race that is set before them. Let them improve present opportunities, and use their health and their strength, while it lasts, to seek the poor sheep that have wandered from the fold; and while they use every means which is put in their power for the conversion of sinners, let them cry mightily unto God that he would be pleased "shortly to accomplish the number of his elect and to hasten his coming."

Let us work while we may—the next warning which God may send through the land, may be of such a nature, that it will make short work, and leave no time to warn sinners of their danger. But however this may be—whether more illness or re-

newed health is in store for us—whether in life or in death, may the Lord be magnified in his people. His people are a blessed people. At all times, and under all circumstances, they find God to be their friend and guard. “The pestilence that walketh in darkness, or the destruction that wasteth at noon-day,” cannot hurt them. It may bring their summons to leave a world of sorrow—but that will be only to open heaven’s gate to them. Oh! who would not be the Lord’s servant? God is a good master. He gives good wages. He provides for his servants in sickness as well as in health—in death as well as in life—in eternity as well as in time.

If you, my reader, are either an open impenitent sinner, or a self-deceived formalist, my parting words to you are, “Come with us and we will do you good.” Cast in your lot with the Lord’s people. Though you have served Satan hitherto, cast away his colours from you, come unto the Lord—come and serve him, and he will make you happy for time and eternity.

F I N I S.