

“The Cripple and His Bible”

At a meeting of the Blackheath Auxiliary Bible Society, in the year 1815, Dr. Gregory, of Woolwich, related the following very interesting facts:—More than twelve months ago, I went, pursuant to the request of a poor, but benevolent-hearted woman in my neighbourhood, to visit an indigent man deeply afflicted. On entering the cottage, I found him alone, his wife having gone to procure him milk from a kind neighbour. I was startled by the sight of a pale, emaciated man, a living image of death, fastened upright in his chair, by a rude mechanism of cords and belts hanging from the ceiling. He was totally unable to move either hand or foot, having more than four years been entirely deprived of the use of his limbs, yet the whole time suffering extreme anguish from swellings at all his joints. As soon as I had recovered a little from my surprise at seeing so pitiable an object, I asked, "Are you left alone, my friend, in this deplorable situation?" "No sir," replied he, in a touching feeble tone of mild resignation, (nothing but his lips and eyes moving while he spoke,) "I am not alone, for God is with me." On advancing, I soon discovered the secret of his striking declaration; for his wife had left on his knees, propped with a cushion formed for the purpose, a Bible, lying open at a favourite portion of the Psalms of David! I sat down by him, and conversed with him. On ascertaining that he had but a small weekly allowance certain, I inquired how the remainder of his wants were supplied. "Why, sir," said he, "'tis true, as you say, seven shillings a-week would never support us; but when it is gone, I rely upon the promise I found in this book: 'Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure;' and I have never been disappointed yet; and so long as God is faithful to his word, I never shall." I asked him if he ever felt tempted to repine under the pressure of so long-continued and heavy a calamity. "Not for the last three years," said he, "blessed be God for it;" the eye of faith sparkling and giving life to his pallid countenance while he made the declaration: "for I have learned from this book in whom to believe: and, though I am aware of my weakness and unworthiness, I am persuaded that He will 'not leave me, nor forsake me.' And so it is, that often, when my lips are closed with locked jaw, and I cannot speak to the glory of God, He enables me to sing His praises in my heart."

Gladly would I sink into the obscurity of the same cottage; gladly even would I languish in the same chair; could I but enjoy the same uninterrupted communion with God, be always filled with the same "strong consolation," and constantly behold, with equal vivid perception, the same celestial crown sparkling before me.