

# The Christian Messenger.

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WHOLE SERIES.  
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## Poetry.

The following beautiful stanzas were written as a Christmas offering for our pages by a friend in England. They should have appeared in last week's issue but arrived after we had gone to press. Although a little late, we prefer to put them in print now rather than keep them for another Christmas occasion.

For the Christian Messenger.

### THE SWEET OLD STORY.

Nail up the Holly—the Holly so gay!  
With its mingling of green and red,  
(For soon we shall greet the Christmas day)  
Whilst the little ones are in bed—

Sleeping so sweetly, with never a care  
Only visions of joyous to-morrow—  
Sweet little faces—heart's light as air,  
'Tis only their elders who sorrow.

But we should be joyous too, for their sake,  
And try to make plain the story;  
Quietly hiding our own heart-ache,  
As we tell of Christ and his glory.

And they will listen with wondrous eyes;  
To the sweet, sweet story of old  
How Jesus came from His home in the skies,  
To gather the lambs to his fold;

Came, on this so-called Christmas day,  
As a babe in manger born,  
Where with his mother he quietly lay  
Nor dreaming of taunt or scorn;

Came to suffer and early too,  
To yield to His Father's will;  
More than example for me and you  
To "suffer and yet be still."

He has risen now, and hence our joy,  
And hence His throne and glory;  
All peace be ours without alloy,  
While we sing the wondrous story.

Then nail the Holly—forgot the care  
"Good will to man" be given,  
Each Christmas brings us nearer where  
Sad hearts find rest in Heaven.  
Christmas, 1871. B. McL. P.

## Religious.

### THE PASTOR'S WIFE.

A TRUE NARRATIVE.

Translated from the German by Mary Weibrecht.

#### CHAPTER IV.—EVERY-DAY LIFE.

Before continuing a series of instances which show how God honoured the firm though humble faith of this gifted woman, a slight sketch of her every-day life will not fail to interest our readers. We resume the narrative of her son. As, except on rare occasions, our father left the whole task of family discipline to our mother's care, she often found difficulties in rendering herself mistress of the responsible position she was forced to occupy, especially as, far from being model children, we boys were high spirited, mischievous urchins. According to her usual plan, however, she committed all her ways to the Lord, and then, instead of desponding at the thought of all she could not do, set cheerily to work, determined to perform faithfully whatever lay in her power. Her first principle in education was to establish a marked distinction between mere failings and actual sins, and while we were promptly reprimanded, and even punished for disorder, heedlessness, or unpunctuality, it was done in the way of discipline; but, whenever an instance of deceit, ingratitude, or unkindness came to light, the whole character of her dealing was altered. It seemed to us that she then assumed the attitude and voice of one of God's priests or prophets of the olden time; deep solemnity accompanied her words, so that as she represented the heinous nature of our offence, we felt them pierce our very joints and marrow, conveying such a terrible sense of guilt, that we hardly knew how to bear it, and would have preferred ten beatings to one such "sermon" as we called it.

A strong influence was exerted by her plan of telling us Bible stories at

night. We looked forward with longing to these delightful hours, and listened entranced to her vivid picturing, which resulted in giving us an intimate acquaintance with Scripture, so that in subsequent public examinations, I, for my part, far outstripped all competitors in this branch, and astonished the examiners themselves.

But the most mighty secret power she gained over us by the force of a holy life. We could not help seeing how free it was from all worldly principle, vanity, self-indulgence, or avarice. So simple and frugal were her personal habits that even in after years, when we tried to persuade her, for the sake of health, to take more care of herself, the invariable reply would be, "Leave me the food and clothes I am used to; they will do well enough for this world. All the ease I might enjoy here would fail to satisfy me after all. There would always be something wanting still. So I will be content, and wait till I get over yonder, where we shall wear garments which will never grow old, and our hunger and thirst will be satisfied for ever." Daily we saw her gaze directed above to the things which are eternal. Her one aim was to sacrifice herself, in order by love to serve others, and to act for eternity. All the striking proofs of blessing, strewn like stars across the dark night of her earthly struggle, show how God owned this singleness of purpose.

No sooner were we lads away from home, than, instead of joining the ranks of the steady and orderly, we made common cause with the most mischievous and daring among our schoolfellows, and it might have seemed as if all home training had gone for nothing; but the seed so deeply sown in our hearts was only buried, not lost; and at last maintained its principle of life in the face of adverse influences. At the age of fifteen, I was at the Seminary of Maulbronn, and belonged to the most merry fun-loving set of boys there, when one day there arose amongst us a great talk about pietism; some arguing in its favour, and others against it. At last I spoke out boldly, and said, "I don't know much about it, but they say my mother is a pietist. If that is true, and if the others are like her, I can only say pietism is real goodness, and the straightway to heaven! After what I have seen and gone through at home, I am so sure about it that I shall never be able to doubt the reality of it." "Well, then," rejoined a schoolfellow, "why ever are you what you are? Why don't you set up for a pietist yourself, without more ado?" "You are right," I answered; "but you see, what has not happened yet, may come to pass some day, and it shall, too!"

Some years later, several of us were visiting our uncle, a rationalist professor at Heidelberg. Knowing our mother's principles, he was curious to find out how far they had taken root in our minds, and often tried to perplex us with religious inquiries. Sister Beaté was the grand champion of our party. He would ask her, "Come now, tell me, what do you take God to be? Is not God the universal principle of goodness?" "No," she promptly answered, "God is the Good One" (not a vague principle but a person). My brother, who was studying medicine he advised to direct his attention to the secrets of nature, which he declared would solve the mystery of many miracles. For instance, he surmised it would be very possible to discover some subtle tincture which might impart to water the colour and flavour of wine, and such means had probably been used by our Lord at the marriage feast of Canaan. "No, indeed," my brother answered sturdily, "such tinctures as Jesus used are not to be found here among men; they are above in the hand of him who created the whole world out of nothing." At length, laying by his weapons, our uncle was fain to confess, "Well, after all, you are your mother's own children."

A few years later, suddenly, as in the spring-time, the seed that had long lain sleeping in our hearts having taken

root, sprang up vigorously. Before the eldest of us had left the University, we had each and all made a free individual choice to walk with our mother in the narrow way which leads to life eternal.

One of her most common practices in daily life was to direct our attention to the parables God had laid up in every page of his wonderful book of nature. In the garden, the field, and the house, she reminded us in a few simple words of these lessons. The weeds, the green trees the blights on our plants, as well as our daily tasks and interests, were all examined, and the hidden meaning and type in each clearly noted with a freshness and originality that marked them forcibly upon our memories. Sometimes, without any seeming reason, she would tell us many of the wise, happy thoughts, with which her mind seemed to overflow; it was the lips running over, out of "the fullness of the heart."

Coming home one day from an expedition, in which she had vainly attempted to borrow a sum of money for the pressing claims of her son's education, Beaté met her, and imagined from her cheerful looks that the money had been forthcoming, for she had left home sad and downcast. "No," said she, "but God has comforted me." As I turned away sorrowfully after being refused, I felt so weak and wretched, that I could hardly go on. All at once, there came into my mind that verse in the story of Abraham and Isaac. "And they went both of them together." Then I thought—"these words were not put into the Bible without a reason, especially as they are twice repeated. Gen. xxii. 6, 8. God saw what was passing in the heart of Abraham, as he climbed that mountain with his son. And, indeed, it is evident that Abraham's distress had then reached the highest pitch. He was to sacrifice the life of his only son. With me, the question relates, not to the temporal but to the spiritual life of my six boys; for that will be endangered if their studies are given up. But now, I am sure God sees it, and has noted it in his book, and this comforts me." The sense of consolation was so lively and strong within her, that for weeks after she called the attention of everyone she met to this passage, adding, "Thus we often have to go a weary pilgrimage; but God sees it. He knows how our hearts are feeling, and writes it in his book."

Another time, she had a letter from a beloved and honoured uncle, in which he reproached her bitterly for persisting in the education of the boys, when she had not sufficient means to carry it out. This grieved her so deeply, that she became quite ill, took to her bed, and could do nothing but weep. Her daughter wondered to see her so unnerved, because, in a general way, she troubled herself little as to other people's opinions, and often used to say, "Never mind, I can wait until God justifies me." Now, however, she exclaimed, "If it only were some one else, I should not care. But this uncle is just the one friend I need, who has always stood by me till now!" No comfort seemed to find its way to her heart, till the next morning, when rising again calm and happy, she told Beaté, "I have examined myself as to whether there is any truth in what they say—that pride and self-will have been actuating me; but it is not so. My reason for persevering with the boys is, the good of their souls. All persons, especially young ones, must have some ruling interest and enjoyment in life. If our lads cannot pursue the studies they care for, they will soon find out other pleasures—those of sense, and they will quickly lead them into sin. Besides, now I see them twice a year, I am able to exert a strong influence over them still; whereas, if they left home to learn a trade, they would be taken quite out of my power. Then again, I should be positively ashamed to meet my father in heaven, unless I had done everything in my power to raise and ennoble my children both in body and soul. He denied himself so sternly in order to bring us up to a good

standing, and how could I look into his face with joy, if I had failed in forwarding the best interests of his grandchildren? I know I am justified before God, so now I can feel quiet, for the Bible says, 'If a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.'"

Scarcely ten years had gone by, before all her friends, and this uncle most especially, were ready to own and honour the triumph of her faith, so that she could remind us of this occasion, with the words, "Did I not say so? God keeps all his promises. Every jot and tittle is fulfilled to those whose ways please him."

Little time had she for reading, even the Bible; and yet, although perfectly simple and unaffected in her discourse, which was peculiarly free from religious phraseology, her daily life was a clear and constant witness against worldliness of form or practice. Each morning she awoke with some text or holy verse upon her mind, and this she appropriated as a subject and motto for the day, and it furnished her with light, strength, and spiritual food.

Once, in going a journey, instead of taking the comfortable place behind, she insisted on sitting in front of the small conveyance in which a farmer was driving her. Years after, the man would speak of that drive, and the long talk that lasted through it. "It was the most delightful journey I ever went in my life," said the honest fellow—a firm friend of my mother's; "it was a distance of thirty-six miles, but the time passed like nothing, and I could hardly believe my eyes when we reached the end." It was her daily verse that furnished the whole topic of this conversation.

#### CHAPTER V.—KING WILLIAM.

By this time our father had held the living of Thalheim nearly ten years, and we were in the midst of our school career, a letter from the Royal Consistory was one day brought to our house, and plunged both our parents into deep anxiety. On his presentation to the living, it had been considered too valuable for a man of his age, and the Consistory therefore requested him to contribute annually a certain portion of the stipend towards a fund for the amelioration of poorer livings. On the plea of his large family, he petitioned against the order, and receiving no reply or further official application, he concluded that the matter had been decided in his favour. And now, after all these years, the whole arrears were suddenly claimed, with a sharp reprimand for past neglect of payment.

On the ground of recent losses through hail, our father excused himself from immediate compliance, and obtained a remission of half the debt. But a year's respite soon passed by, and a crisis of care and distress approached. Day by day, our mother grew more oppressed as the term of payment drew on apace. Just then, we received a visit from a clergyman, an intimate friend, who, struck by our mother's evident and unusual sadness, ventured to ask its cause. She told him her tale of care, and he at once saw well that any further petition on our father's part would be quite out of place. At the same time, he advised her to apply, not to the Council, but direct to the king himself, who was known and beloved as a true father of his country, with an open ear for all who were oppressed. Between them, our friend and herself, they at once composed a letter, fully stating the facts of the case, together with all circumstances calculated to work upon the sympathies of a feeling heart. This petition was dispatched to a cousin of our mother's, then in attendance upon the young Crown Prince, with a request that it might be presented, if possible, with a word of recommendation. At the time the letter reached the palace, the little prince lay ill, and his disease was taking a dangerous type, so that the good cousin hardly knew how to proceed, and for some time carried the papers about, waiting for a favourable moment. One day,

as she was watching by the bedside of the royal child, the king and queen came in to visit him. The little fellow lying weak and ill in his cot, stretched out his arms with joy at the sight of his father, who gently clasped the boy, and drew him to his heart. In the meantime, our cousin handed the papers to the queen, who, glanced them over, and becoming interested and touched, handed them to her husband. He scanned the writing, and then read the whole attentively; after which, taking out a pencil, he wrote underneath, "I undertake to defray the whole debt out of my private purse." At the same time, he ordered this message to be sent by express post to the pastor's wife at Thalheim. Night had come on by the time the royal courier reached Tuttingen, our nearest town; but, according to the strict order, a postilion mounted immediately to carry the dispatch to its destination. Day had not broken, when he came galloping up our village street blowing from his post horn a blast so shrill and clear, that all the good neighbours awoke, stretched their wondering heads out of their respective windows, and asked what could be the matter? At length the horse halted beneath the parsonage walls. Our mother was up and ready to bear the errand of the postilion, handed her over her message, and she, hastening into the house, read the cheering answer to her prayer. With folded hands and tears of joy, she cried: "Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself. One day an innkeeper is thy paymaster, and another, a king 'by the grace of God!' Oh, repay our sovereign for this, his goodness to us, and bless him in soul and body, in time and eternity, thou King of kings. Amen."

(To be continued.)

#### DIGGING FOR WATER.

BY THEODORE L. CUTLER, D. D.

Some of the "out-of-the-way" passages in God's Word contain precious teachings, which will repay us for hunting them out and turning them up. There is a rich ore of truth hidden under them. For example, there is an historical incident narrated in the third chapter of the Second Book of Kings which is very seldom noticed. We read that the kings of Judah and of Israel were at war with the heathen armies of Moab. The armies of the Lord were suffering from the want of water. Within the compass of a seven days' journey they cannot find a drop. In their straits they send for God's prophet, Elisha. He becomes God's oracle, and gives them this message from Heaven: "Thus saith the Lord, make the land full of ditches." The word may be better translated trenches. How shall they be filled? That is not their concern. It is the duty of faith not to question, but to obey. "For thus saith the Lord, ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet this valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink; both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts." The trenches were dug, and presently the waters began to steal into them from some mysterious source: It was not an ordinary process of nature, but a supernatural process, accomplished by the direct agency of God. All the awakening, converting and quickening power that operates on human souls is really supernatural. Up to a certain point human agency acts, but not one hair's breadth further. "Paul may plant," and there he stops; "Apollos may water, and there he must stop. Then comes in the Divine agency when 'God giveth the increase.'" All that the thirsting Israelites could do, or were asked to do, was simply to dig the trenches. And then a supernatural power filled them mysteriously with water. There does not appear to have been any Huxley, or Tyndall, or Darwin in the camp, to teach God's people that supernatural agencies are never exerted, even for a good object. The simple-hearted Israelites wanted water, and they dug