

The Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

NEW SERIES.
Vol. XVI., No. 50.

Halifax, Nova Scotia, Wednesday, December 13th, 1871.

WHOLE SERIES.
Vol. XXV., No. 50.

Poetry.

WE MUST ACT AS WELL AS THINK.

BY EDWARD CARSWELL.

What's the use of writing, of speaking, or inditing,
And wasting printer's ink;
Of penning lengthy leaders, of sending out your pleaders,
If people will not think?

And what's the use of thinking, until your eyes are blinking;
Your brain with study racked?
It all will do no good, (never did and never could),
If people will not act.

There's weeping, and there's sighing, and many people dying,
Through alcoholic drink;
And people say it's true, "but we don't know what to do,"
And we've no time to think.

We know that prohibition would save many from perdition—
We speak it as a fact;
And yet we see them die, or for help we hear them cry,
Yet how many of us act?

Then hesitate no longer! the foe is growing stronger
The longer we delay;
But for God, and man, and right let us rally for the fight,
Let us work as well as pray.
—The Temperance Speaker.

Religious.

THE PASTOR'S WIFE.

A TRUE NARRATIVE.

Translated from the German by Mary Weibrecht.

INTRODUCTION.

"Who through faith obtained promises." Such was the apostle's assertion; and his day did not close the long list of saints, faithful and true, who took God at his word, and gained glorious though noiseless victories by clinging to the covenant of truth, which cannot be broken. Among the poor and hidden ones of earth, these grand witnesses to God's faithfulness have often dwelt apart. Now and then one shines out in public life to make the world wonder and ask, as of old they did, about the Master, "Whence hath this man these things?" The following pages contain a narrative of facts, which to some may seem too strange, and to others too insignificant, to be worthy of record. But to such as believe that God takes the truth concealed from the wise of this world, and reveals it to babes and simple folk, the story will bring a message of encouragement and good cheer.

Only a few years ago there lived in a remote village in the south of Germany a humble and devoted woman, the whole course of whose history bore thrilling testimony to the might which still clings to living faith. In order to trace the motive power of her life to its source, we must, after the fashion of German biographers, wander back among the chronicles of her family.

About one hundred years ago, any one chancing to find himself upon the dusty high road between the villages of Korwe-theim and Neunchingen, in the early afternoon of a summer Sabbath, would have come upon a large concourse of country people, briskly trudging along in the hot sunshine; youths and maidens, old men and staid peasant matrons—in fact, a walking congregation—and in their midst an earnest, holy messenger of Christ, who was their pastor. After attending morning worship, and the subsequent catechetical service, in their own village, these hard-featured sons and daughters of toil would cheerfully set out in the wake of their valued minister, to go and listen to his sermon in the far-off parish church of his father-in-law, Plattich, a distance of several miles. The congregation at Neunchingen had meanwhile assembled, and often sang through several of the heart-stirring German chorals while awaiting their favourite preacher.

This pastor Hahn is described to us as a man of great devotion and power, exerting a remarkable influence both in and out of the pulpit. It was not his clear and well-developed method of thought, nor the gift of eloquence, although he possessed this in a marked degree, that made the common people throng after him and listen so gladly and intently to the word of life from his lips. A dignified appearance, added to these talents, no doubt gave weight to his discourse; but that which made him mighty to sound forth the love and glory of our Lord and of his Christ, was the grace of the Holy Spirit, "the author and give of life." "As he stood before us," said a competent judge, in later years to his grandson, "his face almost transfigured with its expression of high, unearthly light, we no longer felt as if listening to a mere man. Our hearts heard the voice of one whom God had entrusted with a message straight from his own presence." Great was the joy spread abroad in a place when the news reached it that Pastor Hahn was coming to preach. The tidings travelled like wildfire, and everyone crowded to listen and share the blessing.

It was the influence of men such as this, that effectually counteracted the flood of Rationalistic free-thinking, which threatened to destroy the spiritual life of Germany in the last century.

This is the account which reaches us of the father of Beaté Paulus, a woman who proved not unworthy of her saintly parentage. The holy reverence in which she held his memory may be gathered from an oft-repeated saying of her own children, when they noticed the eager delight with which, on a free Sunday hour, she pored over the rich legacy of Hahn's manuscript sermons. "Mother," the little ones would naively exclaim, "the first seat in your heart is the dear Saviour's but the very next is kept for your blessed father!"

It is one of these children who, in graphic language, gives us the details of his mother's bright career; and as far as may be, we will adhere to the words in which he tells them.*

CHAPTER I.—THE PARENTS.

It would hardly be easy to find a married pair differing so widely from each other as did our father and mother. The latter, being a daughter and granddaughter of men alike noted for piety and originality of mind, felt at home in a sphere of thought, dealing with subjects of revealed truth, and a higher life of communion with God, together with the practice of Christian charity. My father, on the other hand, belonged to a family some of whose members had attained to worldly distinction, one of them being a noted Rationalist, hence his interest lay chiefly in intellectual and scientific research, and the enjoyment of social intercourse. Notwithstanding this marked dissimilarity, our parents were united in hearty affection, and mutual admiration and respect characterised their relations. Although differing from the views held by his wife, our father regarded her convictions as sacred, and venerated in her a high spiritual life in which he was not a sharer. Thus, as a child I remember his calling me to a window to witness two pious clergymen approaching our parsonage. "Look, little Philip," said he, "there are two servants of God." When, in the course of subsequent conversation, they asked him whether any pietists lived in the parish; "Certainly, and not a few," was his prompt reply. Surprised, they enquired the number. "Thirty," he said; and noticing their wondering looks, added playfully, "Well, you see, there is my wife, who counts for twenty-four in her own person, and six other women hold with her heart and soul!"

*It may be well to anticipate the surprise that some portions of the story may elicit from English readers, by reminding them of the almost patriarchal simplicity and primitive manners of the country of which Madame Paulus was a native. [Wilttemberg, a small kingdom in South Germany.] The position of woman there differs widely from that which she occupies with us, while, at the same time, it is quite usual to find high intellectual culture co-existing with modes of life which to us seem almost uncivilised in their severe hardness.

For ten years our parents had thus lived very happily together, and were now located at Ostelsheim, a village near Caln, in the Black Forest, where my father's genial temper, united with his wife's loving-kindness, had won the heart of the simple peasants around them. The exceptionally fine vintage of the year 1811 had filled our country with rejoicings, and it was in the midst of this pleasant excitement that our mother sickened, and was soon prostrated by nervous fever. In the middle of one night our father hurriedly sent for his brother, a physician in practice at Stuttgart; for our village doctor began to despair of coping with the disease. Our uncle came in haste, bringing with him a female cousin, who found plenty of work in nursing, and the care of six small children under the age of ten. No one besides was in the house except our old grandmother, and the offers of help made by kind but inexperienced neighbours availed little. Uncle Carl startled our poor father terribly by declaring that recovery would be possible only in one such case out of a hundred; and consternation spread through the village with the sad tidings of our impending loss, for her constant sympathy and kindness had endeared the sufferer to a surprising extent. Our grandmother alone remained calm and collected amid the general lamentation. For long ago she had passed through God's school of sorrow, in the early death of her husband and three highly talented children, just reaching maturity. Under such circumstances she had learned to sacrifice her own will to one higher and divine.

The illness had now lasted for a week, and we were anxiously awaiting the crisis. Vainly the little children gathered round the sick bed, entreating their mother in imploring tones not to go away and leave them. Increasing weakness showed us that death was rapidly approaching, and mournfully our grandmother commenced the sad though needful preparations for the end. By degrees the room became crowded with villagers, who, having heard the rumour of her expected death, longed to have a farewell word from her lips. With his face hidden in his hands, our father stood by the side of his wife in dumb anguish; behind crowded the children, sobbing and wringing their little hands in terror, and a helpless longing to hold back the parting spirit. It was a touching sight, and many tears were shed by those who looked upon it. Only one soul in all that company was calm, and did not weep: that was the mother herself; for she believed that all her toil was over, and being ready to die, nothing remained for her but to say "Good-bye." So she fixed her fading eyes once more upon her husband, and drawing him to her with trembling hands, kissed him as for the last time. She beckoned the children to her side, and caressed them fondly. Finally, making a sign to those around her, she gave her hand to each in turn, and then in a faint voice murmured, "My hour is come. I have reached the goal. Has it not been worth a struggle of some thirty years down here to win ages of immortal glory?" Her tired eyes now closed, and she entered upon the final conflict. That was a moment of strange and holy significance to all of us. At this hour of utter helplessness, when we had come to feel that any power which might raise her would be simply miraculous, a great inexpressible sighing, or rather a groaning, which no word could utter, ascended up to God from out of the hearts gathered round that lowly bed. Suddenly our father roused himself as if from a dream, and signing to the children to follow, left the chamber of mourning. Enquiring looks accompanied the band on their way upstairs, the little ones thronging like sheep behind a shepherd, not knowing whither they went. Quickly opening his study door, he marshalled them round the table, and bade them kneel, himself taking the central place. Then drawing off the customary little velvet cap from his head, and with folded hands, he prayed

that, although he did not deserve the mercy, God would take pity upon him and his children, and leave them the mother whom they so sorely needed. Down upon our knees, we children felt a mysterious thrill pass through us. It seemed as if we had been admitted within the high sanctuary before the throne of the everlasting Father. A vivid expectancy had taken the place of tears, when, with a glance of deep tenderness, our father said, "Now, children, let us go back." And out we stepped again in his wake, down into the silent chamber where many still stood waiting; and as we entered they looked up at us wonderingly, as if they would have asked whether we had gotten a glimpse into the high place of Him whose seat is above the clouds, in whose hands are poised the mystic balances that weigh out life and death. Again we resumed our posts of watching; but who can picture what was going on within our hearts? for into them had entered a calm, deep and still, like the calm of eternity. No movement or grief was visible now; all the company seemed to be holding their breath. Only our eyes were active still, and they remain fixed upon that colourless face on the pillow, and fixed indeed with such intensity, as if our gaze could draw her back to this life of ours.

It was not long before, suddenly opening her eyes, already closed, as it seemed in the death sleep, she spoke almost inaudibly: "Let the people all go. I shall not die."

The room was noiselessly emptied of its occupants, and from that hour she gradually began to recover. Before long, she related the following incident:—"I stood at the very door of eternity, and saw my brothers who had come to fetch me, and was rejoicing greatly at the thought of our eternal union. All at once it occurred to me that if my life on earth could be of further service to my children, I wished God might restore it, and immediately it was impressed upon me that he would do so."

The illness lasted eleven weeks longer, but we felt happy all the time in the quiet confidence that God had given our beloved mother back to us. What God had given us in her, and with her, we little thought. The future was to reveal it.

ADVANCED THINKERS.

BY C. H. SPURGEON.

Some animals make up for their natural weakness by their activity and audacity; they are typical of a certain order of men. Assumption goes a long way with many, and, when pretensions are vociferously made and incessantly intruded, they always secure a measure of belief. Men who affect to be of dignified rank, and superior family, and who, therefore, hold their heads high above the *canaille*, manage to secure a measure of homage from those who cannot see beneath the surface. There has by degrees risen up in this country a coterie, more than ordinarily pretentious, whose favourite cant is made up of such terms as these: "liberal views," "bonds of dogmatism and the slavery of creeds," "modern thought," and so on. That these gentlemen are not so thoroughly educated as they fancy themselves to be, is clear from their incessant boasts of their culture; that they are not free, is shrewdly guessed from their loud brags of liberty; and that they are not liberal, but intolerant to the last degree, is evident, from their superciliousness towards those poor simpletons who abide by the old faith. Jews in old times cursed unbelievers roundly; but we question whether any men in any age, have manifested such contempt of others as is constantly evinced towards the orthodox by the modern school of "cultured intellects." Let half a word of protest be uttered by a man who believes firmly in something, and holds by a defined doctrine, and the thunders of liberality bellow forth against the bigot. Steeped up to their very throats

in that bigotry for liberality, which, of all others, is the most ferocious form of intolerance, they sneer with the contempt of affected learning at the idiots who contend for "a narrow Puritanism," and express a patronising hope that the benighted adherents of "a half-enlightened creed" may learn more of "that charity which thinketh no evil." To contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints is to them an offence against the enlightenment of the nineteenth century; but, to vamp old, worn-out heresies, and pass them off for deep thinking, is to secure a high position among minds "emancipated from the fetters of traditional beliefs."

Manliness and moral courage are the attributes in which they consider themselves to excel, and they are constantly asserting that hundreds of ministers see with them, but dare not enunciate their views, and so continue to preach one thing and believe another. It may be so here and there, and the more is the cause for sorrow; but we are not sure of the statement, for the accusers themselves may, after all, fancy that they see in others what is really in themselves. The glass in their own houses should forbid their throwing stones. If they were straight-forward themselves, they might call others to account; but, in too many cases, their own policy savours of the serpent in a very high degree. The charge could not be fairly brought against all, but it can be proven against many, that they have fought the battles of liberality, not with the broad sword of honest men, but with the cloak and dagger of assassins. They have occupied positions which could not be reconciled with their beliefs, and have clung to them with all the tenacity with which limpets adhere to rocks. Their testimony has, in some cases, been rendered evidently worthless, from the fact that with all their outcry against orthodoxy, they did their best to eat the bread of the orthodox, and would still have continued to profess, and yet to assail, orthodox opinions, had they been permitted to do so. Whether this is honest is doubtful; that it is not manly is certain.

These gentlemen of culture have certainly adopted peculiar tactics. The misbelievers of former ages withdrew themselves from churches as soon as they found that they could not honestly endorse their fundamental articles; but these abide by the stuff, and great is their indignation at the existence of the creeds which render their position morally dubious. Churches have no right to believe anything; comprehensiveness is the only virtue of a denomination; precise definitions are a sin, and fundamental doctrines are a myth: this is the notion of "our foremost men." For earnest people to band themselves together to propagate what they hold to be the very truth of God, is in their eyes the miserable endeavour of bigots to stem the torrent of modern thought; for zealous Christians to contribute to their substance for the erection of a house, in which only the truths most surely believed among them shall be inculcated, is treason against liberality; while the attempt to secure our pulpits against downright error, is a mischievous piece of persecution to be resented by all "intellectual" men. The proper course, according to their "broad views," would be to leave doctrines to the dunces who care for them. Truths there are none, but only opinions; and, therefore, cultivated ministers should be left free to trample on the most cherished beliefs, to insult convictions, no matter how long experience may have matured them, and to teach anything, everything, or nothing, as their own culture, or the current of enlightened thought may direct them. If certain old fogies object to this, let them turn out of the buildings they have erected, or subside into silence under a due sense of their inferiority.

The right to doubt is claimed clamorously, but the right to believe is not conceded. The modern gospel runs thus: "He that believes nothing and doubts everything shall be saved."