

So we find our Westtown friends after an absence of four years.

CHAPTER XIX.—DR. RONSELL'S RETURN.

It was a quiet, lovely Saturday morning in the early autumn. Who does not love to watch the dying gorgeousness of the year when all Nature reminds one of how beautiful, how even triumphant, death may be?

The scene as presented from Ethel's room-window was one of unsurpassed loveliness, yet as she leaned back in the crimson depths of a velvet reclining-chair not a thought of that triumph came to her mind, nor, though her eyes were fixed upon the maples beyond the hedgerow, did she even notice their beauty.

Her husband had parted from her that morning with poorly-concealed ill-temper. Everything seemed very dark and lonely to her just now. In fact, she almost wondered why she lived to be so miserable. In such a frame of mind Florence found her.

Her cousin's cheerily-spoken "Good-morning" received but an indifferent reply, and weary Ethel would gladly have welcomed solitude again.

Presently an enquiry after Aunt Grace's health led to a remark about her present views of a Christian's life and duties.

"Aunt Grace seems very happy now-a-days," Florence had said.

"Yes almost every one seems happy except me," replied Ethel, bitterly.

"And yet God meant that every one of his creatures should be happy." Florence took one small white hand as she spoke.

"Ethel shook her head: "Happiness was never intended for me."

"Why should you be excluded when the promise is so bounteous? Oh, Ethel, why wander farther in the vain search for that which can be found only in Christ? Return to him now; he is grieved at your straying. Come back, and let him bless you."

Florence spoke very earnestly, for very earnest was her desire in her cousin's behalf.

Ethel withdrew her hand coldly, and turned away:

"It is useless for you to talk thus to me, Florence; I am weary of it. How can I return to that from which I never strayed? I have already told you I believe my early profession to have been but an excitement which has long since lost its power. Indeed, Florence I am almost coming to think with my husband that the whole matter of religion is an idle tale which cannot satisfy. Please let us drop the subject entirely and for all time."

A look of pain overspread Florence's face. How had this weak one been led astray! How entirely the influence of her worldly husband had taken possession of her! Yet, denied to speak of the subject, Florence could yet pray for her cousin, and this she did most earnestly.

One month passed by. The leaves so brilliant in their colorings had one by one fluttered down to the lap of mother-earth, so that though the sunshine lay brightly over all, yet from her window Ethel looked out upon the trees stretching their arms heavenward bare and cold.

Once more she sits in the easy reclining-chair gazing without. How changed, yet how unchanged! Since last she occupied that seat Ethel had touched the highest, holiest round in a woman's life; she was a mother.

Yonder on that snowy pillow rests a tiny baby-girl, and locked in that precious casket of flesh was an immortal soul which must live on and on and on now. But how and where?

Should its life be as useless and as unsatisfactory as her own had been? or, if there was more to be regarded than this earthly existence, should it be trained to glorify God and enjoy him for ever?

The thought was not a pleasant one to Ethel; she shrank from the responsibility of its tracing. She turned from the responsibility of its training. She turned from the bare, cheerless trees, and while her nurse might have thought her studying with unwonted interest the roses in the carpet, her mind was busy with the past.

There had been hours when the balance, with life on one side and death on the other, had been very nearly even; they scarcely knew which way it would

turn. What if it had been death? What if the fluttering lids had closed for ever over the blue eyes, and they had laid mother and child away together in the cold, cold ground? Her heart almost stood still at the thought.

Oh, she was so glad, so glad that it was otherwise! Ah, these baby hands, how they stretch forth their little palms and draw us heavenward! They were drawing Ethel now; she felt that she must thank some one that she was there, that her darling lived. Yet whom should she thank? Had she not almost denied the very existence of God? Could she turn to him? or where else could she go?

Aunt Grace had admitted herself at the side door, and now came unannounced into her niece's room. Had she by some mystic power read the thoughts in Ethel's mind she could not more fully have answered them than she did in the words of her greeting:

"Sitting up again, dear?" she said in her cheery way. "Really this seems like old times; God is better to us than our fears. We should be ungrateful creatures if we did not praise him for his goodness toward us in sparing you to us yet a little longer."

Ethel's heart and voice were too full for utterance; seeing which Miss Grace moved softly to the bedside, where the little Maud was awakening, and was apparently oblivious to everything but it, while for the first time in many a long weary month Ethel in her heart rendered thanks unto him to whom alone it is due.

The Passion Play at Ober-Ammergau, Bavaria.

There have been frequent notices of late of this remarkable dramatic performance which began on Whit Sunday, the 16th of May and is being repeated on successive Sundays, and is to continue until the 26th of September at the above mentioned place. A large wooden theatre is built, capable of accommodating five or six thousand people for the special purpose of this exhibition. The following account of the place, the people, and the origin of the play, will be read with interest:—

"Ober-Ammergau is a small village in the mountains of Bavaria, the chief occupation of whose people is wood carving. The play, the full title of which is, *The Great Expiatory Sacrifice of Golgotha, or the Narrative of the Passion and Death of Jesus, According to the Four Evangelists, with Tableau Vivants Taken from the Old Testament*, is a dramatic representation of what is known in the religious world as the Passion of Jesus Christ. The personages represented are Christ himself, St. Peter, St. John, Judas, Pilate, the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalen, with some seven or eight more of those who are prominent in the gospel history, and to these are added a crowd representing the Jews and the few Roman soldiers necessary to the proper representation of the latter scenes. Altogether some three hundred and fifty persons are engaged in the performance. They are all Ober-Ammergau folk. The first scene is the triumphant entry into Jerusalem; the last but one, the crucifixion; the last, the resurrection. The performance takes place in fulfillment of a vow made by the villagers, A. D. 1534, that if they escaped a pestilence which was then wasting the country they would represent Christ's Passion in a miracle play, as it was then called, every ten years. In 1870, the Franco-German war interfered with its representation, for forty of the actors being called to play their part as men in France; but upon the restoration of peace, in 1871, it was enacted amid great rejoicing.

The peasants of Ober-Ammergau are a simple devout people, and there is not the slightest approach to any irreverence in the spirit in which they undertake this representation of the life and Passion of the Lord. The Passion Play is an expression on their part of a profound religious feeling, which they are able to embody in this form partly by reason of their simplicity of nature, and partly because custom and tradition have united to preserve in them a feeling in regard to such representations which has altogether died out of the minds of the rest of the world. Their performance is something wonderful. The great processions and the harmonious working together of masses of people on the Ammergaustage have excited the admiration even of skilled dramatists. Especially does the opening scene of the play, representing Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, when almost five hundred persons, men, women, and little children, join in the pageant, strike the spectator with amazement. It is to be accounted for by the training they receive in the Roman Catholic Church, with its processions and music. The dramatic scene of Christ's "Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem" is for the most part a repetition of the church procession on Palm Sunday, even to the singing of the beautiful choral, "All Hail, All Hail, O David's Son!" The music and singing heard in the Passion Theatre may also be heard in part in the village church,

since the school teacher, Dedler, when composing the music for the "Passion Play," embodied in his work parts of the masses which he had previously written for Sundays and festivals following the ecclesiastical calendar.

The village schools likewise follows the same spirit as the other chief institution of the place, the preceptor acting in subordination to the priest, who is the inspector. One of the necessary qualifications demanded of a school teacher at Ammergau is that he shall be a musician, and, if possible, a composer. The children are very early taught the elements of music, and they have to learn by heart and to sing passages from the drama which makes the glory of the community. They are also exercised in declaiming parts of the "Passion Drama."

The "Passion Play" is composed of no less than eighteen acts, representing the life of Christ from the entry into Jerusalem to the resurrection and ascension. Each of the eighteen acts is prefaced with one or more tableaux vivants, the subject of which is taken from the Old Testament. They stand in the closest connection with the dramatic part of the performance, being so many symbols and prophecies of the scenes from the life of Christ which they are intended to illustrate.

The performance lasts from eight o'clock in the morning till five in the afternoon, with an hour's intermission at noon. It is repeated every Sunday from May to September. Joseph Maier, the rustic artisan, who plays the principal part, has a celebrity more widely extended, though less exalted than that of any actor on the German, French or English stage.

It is said that of late mercenary considerations have had much to do in keeping up this melancholy travesty of the most solemn facts of Christianity. The presentation of Christ in a play is to the Protestant mind a piece of horrible profanity and the profanation of the Sabbath adds to the sadness of the exhibition.

The Romance and the Reality.

By one of the speakers in a great meeting held in London, at Exeter Hall, on the occasion of the last anniversary of the London Baptist Missionary Society, it was said:—

"There are some fields of our missionary work from which accidental interest and the charm of novelty have almost passed away. There is India for example, the first love of our society, the scene of its first labors and triumphs. Much of the fascination with which it was once invested has gone. It no longer appeals to the lower feelings of curiosity. We do not know all about it; but we know far more than the past generation. Audiences cannot now be held spell-bound whilst hearing of its strange religions and philosophies. The suttee is a thing of the past. Juggernaut's car has done its travels of exquisite horror at our missionary meetings. The swinging festival is an old story. But, though others may be affected by the loss of novelty, it should not be so with the friends of missions. There is everything in India to-day which took William Carey there. It was not the charm of novelty or the love of adventure which induced him to go. His imagination was not fired by curiosity to see the wonderful regions which had recently been opened and annexed by the victories of Clive and the magnificent wickedness of Warren Hastings. The barbaric splendor of Indian Courts, the intellectual wealth of Indian literature, would never have drawn him from his Northamptonshire village. He was moved to go there because of the moral and spiritual condition of the people, and because he had heard the voice of Christ bidding him carry to them the good news of salvation. The superstitions still remain, though their hold is perhaps shaken. The people are still perishing for lack of knowledge: Christ only can save them. And these facts, apart from any other, constitute an appeal to which the Christian should ever spring with all its loyalty and all its heroism. There is the same old story to tell that the first missionaries told,—the only story that is old enough to justify man's trusts, yet new enough to meet all his manifold necessities,—that the incarnation of Jesus Christ is the true Avatar; that not in the waters of sacred rivers, but in the stream that flowed from the Saviour's wounded side, sin is cleansed away; and that, instead of trying to think and dream themselves into Nirvana, they are invited to hear the tidings that Christ has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel."

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger. Letter from France.

PARIS, May 30th, 1880.

Within the last week Paris has had a more serious subject of excitement than could be afforded by a literary event. We have been on the eve of a Ministerial crisis and of a not impossible change of Government. The dissension which underlies everything in this country between the moderate Republicans (or Opportunists, as they are called) and the advanced Republicans (or Intransigents) has put forth one of its strongest shoots, and the fall of the Freycinet Ministry was regarded as almost certain. The question was an important one for both sides, it involved in reality that of Government or no Government. In the law on public meetings the committee (presided over by Louis Blanc) insisted that there should be no power given to an official functionary of regulating the course of the assembly or dissolving it in case of disorder. To this the Cabinet absolutely objected, and its chief, M. de Freycinet, declared undisguisedly that he would not abdicate the right for the Executive of watching over the public demonstrations of liberty. He said public order was a necessity. At this the indignation of the *Avances* knew no bounds, and the battle raged for several days in and out of the Chamber.

Paris has been rebuilt from end to end, and the churches and palaces, freed from the sheds and hovels that clung around them in picturesque filthiness, stand out in all the glory of their towering facades; but it is in vain that you will look for style in private houses. The maximum of rent to be collected being the principal object aimed at by modern builders, every new house is a cross between a palace and a barrack, and vaguely suggests a manufactory. The equalization of wealth, the lamentable absence of taste in modern French architects, and the disinclination of painters of talent to devote themselves to decorative work, are amongst the causes which prevent the development of style in private dwelling-houses. Some few landlords show their good taste by imitating the past, and reproducing as nearly as they can, the luxury of the grand epoch of French domestic art. Paris, however, is one of those rare cities where you find here and there an oasis in the midst of the desert. All the quarter around the Hotel de Ville, the Place des Vosges and all the Marais quarter is full of the palaces of the old nobility of France, which, as fashions changed, passed into the hands of the bourgeoisie, and now have, for the most part, been converted into manufactories or warehouses. These houses are often fine specimens of Renaissance or Bourbon architecture.

LOUIS.

For the Christian Messenger.

Dear Sir,— I copy the following from the *Canadian Baptist* of the 17th inst.:—

"EXPLANATION AND PROGRESS.

Rev. Wm. Muir;

DEAR BROTHER:—By special request last Thursday evening I took part in the recognition of the Rev. Wm. Brookman as pastor of Yorkville Baptist Church, in a short address to the church. But it is due to the church of Jesus Christ in Toronto, and to myself, as a minister of the Gospel, that my position in this matter be perfectly understood by the community. I opposed the action of the council, because in the examination of Mr. Brookman it appeared that he denies

1. The obligation of the Decalogue upon the unbelieving Gentile world and the believer;

2. The moral obligation of the sanctification of the weekly Sabbath;

3. The natural and inherent immortality of man;

4. The eternity of the future conscious punishment of the wicked.

The council, which was a large one, professed to "recognize" Mr. Brookman because

1. His position in regard to these points of orthodoxy was apparently more negative than positive;

2. He was a good man, and transparently honest;

3. The Baptist body could not afford to drive him away to another denomination.

4. A number of the council (all regu-

lar Baptists) indulged his views especially on the 3rd and 4th points.

From all I have heard and seen of Mr. Brookman I entertain for him both esteem and affection; notwithstanding I must be permitted to protest solemnly against the action of the council in his case.

Yours, for Christ's sake, J. DENOVAN.

Toronto, June 11th, 1880.

This is a melancholy Report. Some will think that "another Gospel" seems to be looming up in Ontario. It is looming up in many other parts of the world.

When Brother Denovan states that "a member of the Council, (all regular Baptists,) indulged Mr. Brookman's views," especially on the 3rd and 4th points, he shows us, I fear, the thin end of the wedge.

AN ENGLISH BAPTIST.

June 22, 1880.

For the Christian Messenger.

Rev. W. A. Spinney, A. B.

Mr. Editor,—

There has been of late, an amusing series of contradictory paragraphs in our newspapers, relative to the marriage of George Eliot. One day we are informed that she had been married since the death of Mr. Lewes; the next day we are assured that this is not the case. I believe, however, that most persons who are at all interested in the matter are quite clear about the fact, that George Eliot, otherwise known as Marian Evans, has certainly been married since the decease of Mr. Lewes. The only curiosity in the matter is to know who the wiseacre was that originated that contradictory statement.

We seem to have a repetition of this kind of thing in relation to the ordination of W. A. Spinney, A. B., of the Class of 1871. Notices of Mr. Spinney's ordination appeared in the *Examiner & Chronicle* of April 1 and 15. The *Acadia Athenaeum* alluded to the matter in its April issue. But the issue of the *Athenaeum* for May corrects the statement, and asserts that "Mr. Spinney is not a minister, but is master of the Adams Schools, Newtonville, Mass."

From students just returned from Newton Theological Institution I learn that our friend W. A. Spinney, of the Class of 1871, is without doubt the veritable gentleman who was ordained at North Scituate, Mass., on March 25, 1880. It may be that this interesting question will not be regarded as settled beyond dispute, until the young bishop shall have sent a letter to the *Messenger* proving his personal identity.

CLASSMATE.

June 19, 1880.

For the Christian Messenger.

Cornelius.

Mr. Editor,

I was conversing with some intelligent friends about the character of Cornelius, spoken of in Acts x. I was much surprised that they maintained that Cornelius was not a Christian. The chief weight of their argument rested on the word *saved*. Cornelius was directed by the Angel to go to Peter and "hear words whereby he and all his house would be saved." Acts xi. 14. Now it is evident, previous to this information of the Angel, that Cornelius was a man that feared God, with all his house, see Acts x. 2. Now if any man can fear and honor God in his heart without being a Christian, it is entirely a new doctrine to me, a doctrine, I am positive nowhere taught in the Bible. For all men previous to a spiritual birth are at enmity to God in their hearts, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. Rom. viii. 7." Now it is a marvellous contradiction, to suppose that Cornelius could fear and honor God, and at the same instant of time be at enmity to God in his heart. How is Christianity proved that it dwells in any man? By their fruits, says Christ, ye shall know them, therefore the fruit brought forth by Cornelius be fore the Angel came to him prove him to have been a Christian. I am doubtful if there is now a man upon the earth so distinguished for his piety and good works, as this same Cornelius. His devotion and alms-giving is held in pleasing remembrance before God, therefore we draw a safe conclusion when we say he was a good Christian man.

JOHN ROWE.

Hebron, April 8, 1880.