

The Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

NEW SERIES.
Vol. XXVI., No. 23.

Halifax, Nova Scotia, Wednesday, June 8, 1881.

WHOLE SERIES.
Vol. XLV., No. 23.

Poetry.

Cheering Voices from many Lands.

TRANSLATED BY LYDIA M. MILLARD.
A soul, blue-skied, that always sees
Some sunshine in the dark,
Can ever find some heavenly breeze
To help its trembling bark.
—From the Swedish.

Bear, with all thy bravest power,
All that heaven hath sent to thee;
Now a grave and now a bower,
Ever mortal lot must be.
—From the Spanish.

Though sorrow hover round thee now,
Joy may be coming soon;
Not always bends Apollo's bow—
His silent lyre may tune.
—From the Latin.

Lift thy head, throw off thy sadness,
Never let the joy-buds chill;
If thou nurse each germ of gladness,
Gladness all thy life may fill.
—From the Danish.

O, who can stretch himself in ease
Before the world's most glorious deeds?
In indolence can bow
When martyrs, saints, and heroes all
Do after him unceasing call?
O idler, what art thou!
—From the German.

God is the Author great, and men but
players all;
To each some part is given;
The grandest acts performed on earth
Were all composed in Heaven.
—From the French.

If we reach not the height we seek,
We need not blame our fortune drear;
For to our own small selves belongs
The blame of our small sphere.
—From the Greek.

The rock, that's whitened by the wave,
Its battered head must quiet keep;
Now smoothly on it seems to glide,
Now buried 'neath the towering tide;
But when the sea grows calm and sweet,
It comes at last to kiss its feet.
—From the Italian.

Thou, silent, unheard One,
All voices dost tone,
All worlds giving music
From border to throne—
Look down on our weakness,
And pity our sin,
And help us thy greatness
Forever to hymn.
—From the Greek.

Sound, sound, some heavenly bell!
And call us all to pray;
To love some real good so well,
We'll chase no phantom gay.
—From the German.
—*Christian Intelligencer.*

Religious.

The Good Shepherd.

BY REV. A. MCLAREN, D. D.

"I am the Good Shepherd and know My sheep, and am known by mine." As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.—John x 14-15.

"I am the Good Shepherd." Perhaps even Christ never spoke more truthful words than these. Just think how many solitary, wearied hearts they have cheered, and what a wealth of encouragement and comfort there has been in them for all generations. The little child as it lays itself down to sleep, cries

Jesus, tender Shepherd, hear me,
Bless thy little lamb to-night,
and the old man lays himself down to die muttering to himself, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." "I am the Good Shepherd." No preaching can do anything but weaken and dilute the force of such words, and yet, though in all their sweet, homely simplicity they appear to every heart, there are great depths in them that are worth pondering, and profound thoughts that need some elucidation.

There are three points to be noticed—First, the general force of the meta-

phor, and then the two specific applications of it which our Lord himself makes.

First of all then let me say a few words as to the general application of the metaphor. The usual notion of these words confines itself to the natural meaning, and runs out into very true, but, perhaps, a little sentimental, consideration, laying hold of what is so plain on the very surface that I need not spend any time in talking about it. Christ's pattern is my law; Christ's providence is my guidance; my defence—which in the present case means Christ's companionship—is my safety, my sustenance—which in the present case means Christ himself is the bread of my soul. The Good Shepherd exercises care, which absolves the sheep from care, and in the present case means that my only duty is meek following and quiet trust. "I am the Good Shepherd"—here is guidance, guardianship, companionship, sustenance—all responsibilities laid upon his broad shoulders, and all tenderness in his deep heart, and so for us just obedience and quiet trust. Another way by which we get the whole significance of this symbol is by noticing how the idea is strengthened by the word that accompanies it. Christ does not say, "I am a Shepherd," but he says, "I am the Good Shepherd." At first sight that word "good" is interpreted, as I was saying in a kind of sentimental, poetic way, as expressing our Lord's tenderness and love and care; but I don't think that is the full meaning here. You find up and down this Gospel of St. John phrases such as "I am the true bread," "I am the true vine," and the meaning of the word that is translated "good" is very nearly parallel with that idea. The true bread, the true vine, the true shepherd—which comes to this, to use modern phraseology, that Jesus Christ, in his relation to you and me, fulfils all that in figure and shadow is represented to the meditative eye by that lower relationship between the material shepherd and his sheep. That is the picture, this the reality. There is another point to be made clear, and that is, that whilst the word "good" is perhaps a fair enough representation of that which is employed by our Lord, there is that a special force and significance attached to the original which is lost in our Bible. I do not know that it could have been preserved; but still it is necessary to state it. The expression here is one that is generally rendered "fair," "or lovely," or "beautiful," and it belongs to the genius of that wonderful tongue in which the New Testament is written that it has a name for moral purity, considered as being lovely, the highest goodness, and the serene beauty, which was what the old Greeks taught, howsoever little they may have practised it in their lives. And so here the thought is that the shepherd stands before us, the realization of all that that name means, set forth in such a fashion as to be infinitely lovely and perfectly fair, and to draw the admiration of any man that can appreciate that which is beautiful, and can admire that which is of good report. There is another point still in reference to this first view of the text. Our Lord not only declares that he is the reality of which the earthly shepherd is the shadow, and that he is the flawless, perfect, but that he alone is the reality. I am the Good Shepherd; in me and in me alone is that which men need. And that leads me to another point that must just be mentioned, that you won't get the profound meaning of this metaphor by simply looking at its natural signification. You have to take into account that the emblem has another side, and that when our Lord used these words he was using old words with a new significance, that it is a second edition of the figure, and that here we are to remember all that went before. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want;" "Thou leadest thy people like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron." these are but specimens of a continuous series of utterances in the old revelations in which

Jehovah himself is the shepherd of mankind; and then there is another class of passages of which I quote one or two, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, and carry them in his arms." "Awake, oh sword, against the man who is thy fellow; smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered." There were, we should remember, two streams of representation, according to the one of which God himself was the Shepherd of Israel, and according to the other of which the Messias was the Shepherd; and here, as I believe Jesus lays his hand on both the one and the other, and says, "They are mine and they testify of me." So sweet, so gracious are the words that we lose the sense of the grandeur of them, and need to think before we are able to understand how great and immense the claim that is here made upon our faith, and that this man stands before us and arrogates to himself the Divine prerogative witnessed for of old by psalmist and prophet, and says that for him were meant the prophecies of ancient times that spake of a human shepherd, and asserts that all the sustenance, care, authority, command, which the emblem suggests meets in him in perfect order.

Now let us turn to the two special points which our Lord emphasises here, as being those in which his relation as the Good Shepherd is not conspicuously given. The language of my text runs—"I am the Good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father." Our western ways fail to bring out the full meaning of the emblem; but all Eastern travellers tell us what a strange bond of sympathy and loving regard, and docile recognition, springs up between the shepherd and his sheep away there in the Eastern pastures and deserts; and how the man knows every one, though they are so like each other to a stranger; and how even the dumb instincts and the narrow intelligence of the silly sheep recognise the shepherd, and won't be deceived by garments that are feigned, and will not follow the voice of a stranger. And look how wonderfully beautiful that is Christ lays hold of the dumb instincts of the animal, as illustrating, at the one end of the scale, the relation between him and his followers, and lays hold of the communion between the Father and the Son at the other end of the scale, as illustrating the same thing. "I know my sheep." That is a knowledge like the knowledge of the shepherd, a bond of close intimacy. But he does not know them by reason of looking at them and thinking about them. It is something far more blessed than that. He knows me because he loves me; he knows me because he has sympathy with me, and I know him, if I know him at all, by my love, and I know him by my sympathy, and I know him by my communion. A loveless heart, does not know the Shepherd, and unless the Shepherd's heart was all love he would not know his sheep. The shepherd's love is an individualised love. He does not know his flock; but he knows the units of it, and we can rest ourselves upon the personal knowledge, which is personal love, and sympathy of Jesus Christ. "And my sheep know me"—not by force of intellect, not by understanding certain truths, all important as that may be, but by having our hearts harmonized in him, and our spirits put into sympathy and communion with Him. "They know me," and they have rest with the knowledge; "they know me," and that's the best answer to all doubt and fear. They are exposed to danger, but in the fold they can go quietly to rest, for they know that I am at the door watching through it all.

Turn for a moment to the last point, "I lay down my life for the sheep." I have said that our western ways fail to bring out fully the element of the metaphor which refers to the kind of sympathy between the shepherd and the sheep; and our western life also fails to bring out this other element also. Shepherds in England never have need to lay down their life for the sheep.

Shepherds in Palestine often did, and sometimes do. You remember David with the lion and the bear, which is but an illustration of the reality which underlies this metaphor. So, then, in some profound way, the Shepherd's death is the sheep's safety. First of all, look at that most unmistakable, emphatic—I was going to say vehement, at any rate intense—expression of the absolute voluntariness of Christ's death, "I lay down my life"; as a man might strip off a vesture. And this application of the metaphor is made all the stronger by the words which follow:—"Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." We read, "Smite the Shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered"; but here, somehow or other, the smiting of the sheep is not the scattering but the gathering of the flock. Here, somehow or other, the dead Shepherd has power to guard, to guide, to defend them. Here, somehow or other, the death of the Shepherd is the security of the sheep; and I say to you, the flock, that for every soul the entrance into the flock of God is through the door of the dying Christ, who laid down his life for the sheep, and makes them his sheep who trust in him.

Beginnings in Public Prayer.

There comes a time in the life of every young man, who becomes a member of the church, when he must decide whether he will or will not lead the devotions of others in prayer. Sometimes the test is made in the family, sometimes in the prayer-meeting; but it comes, and often unexpectedly, and so greatly embarrasses the young man.

We believe that the proper thing to do is always to respond, and do just as well as one can. It will be pleasanter afterward to reflect on that course, than to remember that one refused; and the fact of having consented and done something in that way—be it ever so little—will give moral courage to the desire of the heart, and the second effort will be stronger, and one's consent will come easier. When a trial of this sort is passed successfully, then the embarrassment and fear for the most part are over, and one can rely on himself to always try to do his duty in this regard.

Now, in many of our churches are to be found young men and boys who are soon to become important factors in these churches. Let them resolve to do just what the pastor and deacons call on them to do; do it in the spirit of grace and humility: the sympathies and prayers of all the brethren and sisters will go with them; and, in a little while, these young brethren will wear off the embarrassment, and God will help them and they will grow useful and helpful to pastor and church. The point is this: don't think you can't speak to God for the brethren in prayer, and so refuse. If you refuse once, you have opened up the way to refuse again or not be called on, and three or four refusals will more than likely decide the matter, and then all your life you will be a dumb Christian! You will be hiding your light under a bushel. A great deal depends on starting right! and it is certainly right for a person to pray in the family or prayer-meeting.

When taking the care of—church, we were inquiring of one of the deacons as to whom we might ask to lead in prayer in the prayer-meeting. Said he: "Brother G. will always respond." Now, there were two brethren G. in the church. We understood the deacon to mean Bro. John G. whereas he meant Bro. William G. At prayer-meeting the following week, we called on Bro. John G. to pray; he bowed, tried, uttered a few requests evincing great embarrassment, and then repeated the Lord's Prayer, and said "Amen." After prayer-meeting closed, he and his wife came to us—he to express surprise

at being called on, his wife to say: "Bro. S. I'm glad you did it; I've tried to induce him to have family prayer with me and the children, but he refuses; and now he has had to pray in public," and I want you to urge him to take up family prayer." Of course we did. That night at home the wife brought forward the Bible, saying: "John, you can pray; you must now go on; to refuse now will greatly retard your usefulness; the children and I will keep quiet till you read and pray." He consented, and after a little time he thanked me for calling on him at prayer-meeting, even by mistake; and now a grandfather, he has always since observed family religion in his home, and God has given his children in regeneration as they have grown old enough. We think he decided wisely in the unexpected trial, and we think his wife was a great help to him too.—*Baptist Courier.*

The Blessed Gate.

There is a gateway at the entrance of a narrow passage in London, over which is written, "No burdens allowed to pass through." And there is another gate through which no burdens will ever pass: it is the gate of pearl. And there is another city into which this gate leads; it is the city of New Jerusalem. London is the city of man, Jerusalem the city of God. London is the city of time; Jerusalem the city of eternity. There is sorrow and sin in London; there is neither in the holy city. There is death in London; there is no death in Jerusalem the golden. London is two thousand years old; Jerusalem is the city of unnumbered years. London has four millions of people dwelling within her precincts; Jerusalem will have a multitude that no man can number. London will go down in the crash of earth's fiery doom; Jerusalem will stand for ever and ever. Which of these cities do you prefer?

And, after all, mortals do carry their burdens through that London gate. These burdens may not be visible to the eye, but, nevertheless, the sore, the sad, stricken heart bears them, and they are many. Beneath the weight of these burdens men stoop and their steps falter. Into that mighty city, day and night, men and women bear heavy burdens so crushing that they would fain fling them at their feet, but they cannot. But no burdens will pass the gate of the better, the enduring city: the burden of evil, the burden of grief, the burden of hearts so broken as never in time to be healed, the countless burdens of the world's long, dreary night,—none of these can enter there. All will be laid down forever at the beautiful gate. In the light of a long sweet home, in the breast of a glad, glorious welcome, into the air of the eternally blessed, they will pass who cross that threshold and are enfolded within. O blessed gate! Towards thy ever open portals we onward press. Holy Bridegroom, we beseech thee, let us in.

A Child's definition of Prayer.

The other day a poor woman came into my shop to speak to me on business matters concerning a daughter of hers, who is doomed to be a cripple for life. I soon found that she was a sorrowful Christian; one of those who give many a furtive glance at Goliath without seeing David close by—looking at her troubles away—not looking to the Lord at all. When I spoke of Jesus as the all-sufficient One, she began to tell me of a little boy, seven years of age, she had lost recently, and of what he delighted in speaking of. The love of God in Jesus was his theme. When life was drawing to a close he spoke of mercy and of grace; of faith in God as his only foundation for the hope of going when he died, to be with Jesus who died for him. Being visited a day or two before he died, by an unconverted relative of mature years, the relative asked him how he was. When he answered that he was very happy though sick in body, that his faith kept