

The Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

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{ WHOLE SERIES. }
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Poetry.

CHRISTMAS CAROL.

I.
There's a song in the air!
There's a star in the sky!
There's a mother's deep prayer
And a baby's low cry!
And the star rains its fire while the Beautiful sing,
For the manger of Bethlehem cradles a King!

II.
There's a tumult of joy
O'er the wonderful birth,
For the Virgin's sweet boy
Is the Lord of the earth.
Ay! the star rains its fire, and the Beautiful sing,
For the manger of Bethlehem cradles a King!

III.
In the light of that star
Lie the ages imperiled;
And that song from afar
Has swept o'er the world.
Every hearth is aflame, and the Beautiful sing
In the home of the nations that Jesus is King.

IV.
We rejoice in the light,
And we echo the song
That comes down through the night
From the heavenly throng.
Ay! we shout to the lovely evangel they bring,
And we greet in his cradle our Saviour and King.
—Scribner's Monthly.

Religious.

GOLD, FRANKINCENSE, AND MYRRH.

Wherever the cross, the sign of God's unspeakable gift, points to heaven from church-spires, or glows in the imagination of loving Christian hearts, there, during the past week, have been thoughtful questionings such as these: "What can I give to father, mother, sister, brother?" "What will please husband most?" "Will this, or that, suit the taste of my wife?" and, "What would delight our darling first-born?" It is right to regard the birthday of Christ as the happiest of days to those who are called by his name. It is a day to be honored by special gratulations, by the blossoming of wishes sweetly expressed by true love-tokens, and by the unseen beauty of silent prayer. It is a day to be made bright with flowers, to be filled with the melody of grateful hearts, to be sanctified by the glad communion of saints. It is the day above all others on which the great Christian family should forget everything but the joy and the peace which grow out of domestic unity; and on which its members should see eye to eye and heart to heart, and should come together, bringing their "surprises" of holy charity and fragrant hope and costly balsam of faith to the common altar of that most blessed memory which dates from "the year of our Lord—"

We rejoice in the increasing regard paid to the associations of Christmas in every portion of the wide household of Christ. It were a shame for uncertainty regarding the date or for dissent from particular modes of celebration to keep any back from offering natural tributes of praise. Unto all of us was a King, an Elder Brother, a Saviour, born in the manger at Bethlehem; and whether we know the precise day or not, whether we all have similar methods of worship or not, nothing should hinder a unanimous outpouring of our hearts' wealth into whatever chalices are hal- lowed by usage. There is nothing said of the vessels which contained the treasures of the Eastern sages. "And when they had opened" them, "they presented unto him gifts." They came with bounteous intent and free, glad reverence, which made them forget whether one or several days had elapsed since the day of days, and whether with material gifts they could enrich the King of Kings. They doubt- less felt sure that in giving of their

best with spontaneous joy they could more please God than by any other act which their far-famed wisdom could devise.

Fortunately that primeval luxury of giving to Christ loses nothing by repeated indulgence. The fine gold of charity has not become dim; the perfume of a hopeful life and trusting spirit has not lost its sweetness since the mysterious babe first caught the glitter of earthly wealth and first scented the odor of frankincense and myrrh. But with every simple act of homage, with every sacrifice for the Beloved, with every heart-beat in sympathy with those who belong to Him has an earthly symbol been transmuted into a heavenly reality, and a gift offered by finite hands has been received and laid close to the heart of our Infinite Friend.

Therefore let us keep the feast, not with any leaven of undue solemnity, or of reluctance, or of division, but with joy upon our heads, with music in our voices and in our hearts, with fraternal unity upon our mountains of Zion. Let words, fitly spoken and sacrifices acceptable to God and man be the apples of gold and the odor of a sweet smell which shall show us worthy to join the Magi in adoration of Immanuel, new-born within us.—*Christian Union.*

THE PASTOR'S WIFE.

A TRUE NARRATIVE.

Translated from the German by Mary Weibrecht.

CHAPTER II.—THE LADS.

According to the normal order of things, a man finds his course in life marked out for him among public and professional duties, while the sphere of woman is limited to domestic occupations, and the care and training of families. Nowadays this system is overturned in many cases where, as the saying goes, "The man cooks, and the wife dictates;" but in our house, the ancient fashion prevailed in full force, and my father in no wise troubled himself. As to the internal economy or the children's education, all these matters lay exclusively in his wife's jurisdiction; so much so, indeed, that with her mother's help, she was obliged even to give the lads the grounding of their classical education. It was well for us that circumstances had fitted her for the post of teacher. In her youth our grandmother had studied with her father's pupils, until she could have passed the university entrance examinations with greater ease than any of them; and as our mother's education had been equally thorough, she was quite at home among both Greek and Latin classics. Only that, being obliged at the same time to conduct the household arrangements of a large family, the methods of teaching she was often forced to adopt differed so widely from those of a well-ordered school, that a professional pedagogue might have wrung his hands in horror at witnessing them! It would sometimes happen, for instance, that whilst she stood busily engaged at the washing-tub, we boys formed a circle round her, and jumping up and down, in measured steps, recited, or rather sang through the Latin declensions. She could seldom find quiet time for Bible history lessons in the day, so that this branch of study was mostly postponed until we lay in our beds in the evening. Then, sitting beside us, she would picture Bible scenes in such vivid colours, that we were completely fascinated. When she did not appear quickly on these occasions, we used to lie waiting in the greatest impatience, crying in a shrill chorus from time to time, "Mother, come, tell us! tell us!" When, very tired, she occasionally herself lay down to rest, while narrating; but if she showed any symptoms of falling asleep and ceasing her tale, the little voices roused her with the ever-recurring question, "What then, mother?" Once, feeling worn out, she was thus resting, while recounting the conversation of Jesus with Nicodemus, and every mo-

ment seemed on the point of dropping off into slumber, so that the chorus of our voices sounded incessantly in urging her on. At length, quite overcome with drowsiness, she made one strong, final effort to rouse her drooping faculties, and took up our question. "And then the Saviour said, 'O Nicodemus . . . you might just as well have come in the day-time!'" At which assertion, we became aware that it was best to give up our delightful story for the time being, and let her rest in peace.

These lessons went on for a while, but soon she saw very well that it was impossible for our education to flourish under such circumstances, and that we must be put into a proper school if we were to get forward in earnest. Our father, looking upon his very narrow means, would not hear of such a thing, and gave it as his opinion that an honest shoemaker was better off than a poor parson; and that unless one had means to educate the lads, it was much better to put them to a respectable trade.

Our mother, however, could not see the force of these arguments, and finally resolved to place her sons at school, trusting that God would help her to provide means to carry them through a regular course of study. The two eldest, aged eleven and twelve, were thus despatched to Leonburg, where, through the influence of a friend, who was glad to make some return for kindness our mother had once shown him, they gained admittance into a good and cheap boarding house. Our father, however, refused to contribute anything towards the expense incurred, and though only a small sum was required, the responsibility of providing it weighed heavily upon our mother. She could only obtain it by selling the produce of some fields attached to the parsonage, the management of which had always been entirely left to her. Now, therefore, she made it her great object skilfully to husband these resources. She rarely hired labourers, but did the greater part of the field work herself, with the help of her daughters. At the same time, whilst continuing to supply the table as usual for my father, she and the children ate their frugal meals with the servants, their unvarying bill of fare being—soup for breakfast, vegetables and dumplings for dinner, and sour milk with potatoes for supper. Meat was a luxury produced only on Sundays and rare occasions. By means of such severe economy, she actually succeeded in supplying the requisite funds, though not always quite regularly. Now and then, blight, drought, or other trials of that sort disturbed the order of things; then distress prevailed, and good counsel would have been precious, had we known where to go for it.

On one occasion, shortly before harvest, the fields stood thick with corn, and our mother had already calculated that their produce would suffice to meet all claims for the year. She was standing at the window one day, casting the matter over in her mind with great satisfaction, when her attention was suddenly caught by some heavy black clouds with white border, drifting hurriedly across the summer sky. "It is a hail-storm!" she exclaimed, in dismay, and quickly throwing up the window, and leaning out, her eyes rested upon a frightful mass of wild storm cloud, covering the western horizon, and approaching with rapid fury. "O God!" she cried, "there comes an awful tempest, and what is to become of my corn!" The black masses rolled nearer and nearer, while the ominous rushing movement that precedes a storm began to rock the sultry air, and the dreaded hail-tones fell with violence. Half beside herself with anxiety about those fields lying at the eastern end of the valley, she now lifted her hands heavenward, and wringing them in terror, cried: "Dear Father in heaven, what art thou doing? Thou knowest I cannot manage to pay for my boys at school, without the produce of those fields! O turn thy hand, and do not let the hail blast my hopes!" Scarcely, however, had these words crossed

her lips, when she started, for it seemed to her as if a voice had whispered in her ear: "Is my arm shortened that it cannot save thee in other ways?" Abashed, she shrank into a quiet corner, and there entreated God to forgive her want of faith. In the meantime the storm passed; and now various neighbours hurried in, proclaiming "that the whole valley lay thickly covered with hailstones down to the very edge of the parsonage fields, but the latter had been quite spared." The storm had reached their border, and then suddenly taken another direction into the next valley. Moreover, that the whole village was in amazement, declaring that God had wrought a miracle for the sake of our mother, whom he loved.

She listened, silently adoring the goodness of the Lord, and vowing that henceforth her confidence should be only in him.

CHAPTER III.—THE PLACE ABOVE THE TRAP-DOOR.

There is a story of a famous astronomer, who once predicted fine weather for a particular day on which he invited some guests to a garden party. When they had assembled it began to rain, and his friends remarking upon the failure of his expectations, he rejoined: "I may make an almanac, but our Lord God makes the weather."

We could all tell instances of the differing of our heavenly Father's thoughts from ours, as testified by an old adage: "None can climb into God's cabinet." At times, the variations between his plans and ours are so startling, that his ways proclaim themselves as "not only wonderful, but past finding out."

Five of my mother's six boys had by this time been placed in different schools, and it may be imagined that the task of providing for them almost outstripped her powers. Thus it came to pass that the demand for the various payments had been several times repeated. The burden of care was of itself enough for our mother, but it became intolerable when accompanied by the incessant reproaches of her husband, who would say: "There, you see! I always told you that you were attempting impossible things. You would take your own way, sending out one lad after another, and now your selfwill is going to bring disgrace upon us." In the face of this accusation, our mother boldly stood by her assertion, that God would never leave her in trouble, and she expected him to help very soon. These discussions always ended by our father giving way, with the words: "Well, we shall see, *tempus docebit.*" Things were in this uncomfortable state, when, as he was one day sitting alone in his study, lost in thought, a knock at the door announced the entrance of the postman, bringing three letters from the different towns where the boys were boarding. Each of them contained the same message, which was, that unless the dues could be settled at once, the lads would be dismissed. Our father read the letters with growing excitement, and spread them out upon the table to show his wife, who had barely crossed the threshold, when he cried: "There, look at them, and pay our debts with your faith! I have no money, nor can I tell where to go for any." Seizing the papers, she rapidly scanned them with a very grave face, but then answered, firmly: "It is all right; the business shall be settled. For He who says: 'The silver and the gold is mine,' will find it an easy thing to provide these sums." Saying which, she hastily left the room. Our father readily supposed she intended making her way to a certain rich friend who had helped us before. He was mistaken, for this time her steps turned in a different direction. We had in the parsonage an upper loft, shut off by a trap-door from the lower one, and over this door it was that she now knelt down, and began to deal with Him in whose strength she had undertaken the work of her children's education. She spread before him those letters from the study table,

and told him of her husband's half-scoffing taunt. She also reminded him how her life had been redeemed from the very gates of death for the child's sake, and then declared that she could not believe that He meant to forsake her at this juncture: she was willing to be the second whom he might forsake, but she was determined not to be the first.

In the meanwhile, her husband waited downstairs, and night came on; but she did not appear. Supper was ready, but she stayed in the loft. Then the eldest girl—her namesake, Beaté—ran up to call her; but the answer was: "Take your supper without me; it is not time yet for me to eat." Late in the evening, the little messenger was again despatched, but returned with the reply: "Go to bed. The time has not come for me to rest." A third time, at breakfast next morning, the girl called her mother. "Leave me alone," she said; "I do not need breakfast; when I am ready, I shall come." Thus the hours sped, and downstairs her husband and children began to feel frightened, not daring, however, to disturb her any more. At last the door opened, and she entered, her face beaming with wonderful light. The little daughter thought something extraordinary must have happened, and running to her mother with open arms, asked eagerly, "What is it? Did an angel from heaven bring the money?" "No, my child," was the smiling answer; "but now I am sure that it will come." She had hardly spoken, when a maid, in peasant costume, entered, saying, "Good morning, madam. The master of the 'Linden Inn' sends to ask if you can spare the time to see him." "Ah, I know what he wants," answered our mother. "My best regards, and I will come at once." Whereupon, she started, and mine host, looking out of the window, saw her from afar, and came forward to welcome her with the words, "Oh, madam, how glad I am you have come!" Then leading her into his back parlour, he said, "I cannot tell how it is, but the whole of this last night I could not sleep for thinking of you. For some time I have had several hundred gulden lying in that chest, and all night long I was haunted by the thought that you needed this money, and that I ought to give it you. If that be the case, there it is, take it, and do not trouble about repaying me. Should you be able to make it up again, well and good, if not, never mind." On this, my mother said, "Yes, I do most certainly need it my kind friend; all last night I too was awake, crying to God for help. Yesterday there came three letters, telling us that all our boys would be dismissed unless the money for their board is cleared at once." "Is it really so?" exclaimed the innkeeper, who was a noble hearted and spiritual Christian man. "How strange and wonderful! Now I am doubly glad I asked you to come!" Then, opening the chest, he produced three weighty packets, and handed them to her with a prayer that God's blessing might rest upon the gift. She accepted it with the simple words, "May God in blessing make up to you this service of Christian sympathy; for you have acted as the steward of One who has promised not even to leave the giving of a cup of cold water unrewarded."

Husband and children were eagerly awaiting her at home, and those three dismal letters still lay open on the table, when the mother, who had quitted that study in such deep emotion the day before, stepped up to her husband, radiant with joy. On each letter she laid a roll of money, and then cried, "Look, there it is! And now believe the faith in God is no empty idea."

(To be continued.)

PROFANITY never did any man the least good. No man is richer, or happier, or wiser for it. It commends no one to any society. It is disgusting to the refined, abominable to the good, insulting to those with whom we associate, degrading to the mind, unprofitable, needless and injurious to society.