

Poetry.

Nearer My God to Thee.

BY REV. S. T. RAND.

Propius, O Deus mi, propius a Te, Etiam crux erit quae tollat me: Canam perpetue— "Mi Deus, prope Te;" "Propius, O Deus mi, propius a Te." Quamquam, erroni noctu similis, Quiescam super stratum lapidis,— Delectat esse me In somnis prope Te; Propius, O Deus mi, propius a Te. Ut scalae tunc ad coelos via sit; Quaequaque mihi des, clementia fit: Suntu coelicolae; Nutantes vocent me, Propius, O Deus mi, propius a Te. Tum exspectata laude fulget mens: Malis petrosus "Bethel" extruens: Sic moeror urget me, Mi Deus, prope Te, Propius, O Deus mi, propius a Te. Si laetis pennis findens aera, Stellis relictis, petam, supera— Quam jucundissime, Cantabo—"Prope Te," Propius, O Deus, mi, propius a Te."

[For the Christian Visitor.]

Divine Chastening.

BY REV. J. CLARK, DARTMOUTH, N. S.

The Bible has a word for everybody. Rich and poor, old and young, the busy and the idle, are alike addressed. Nor are the suffering and the afflicted forgotten. There are many messages of comfort written expressly for them. Here is one of them: "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Think of the chastened ones, when the Lord loveth every son. The Creator loves the creature. This is strange, this is wonderful. God is holy; man is sinful. God is infinite; man is finite. God is clothed with glory and majesty; man is stripped to his shame. God is essentially and eternally good—good in all his thoughts, and words and ways; man delights in evil, and the "imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually." Notwithstanding, the Lord looks down upon us with pity and compassion. He not only thinks of us and cares for us, but he actually loves us. He is love itself. He must cease to be before he can cease to love. Many of the sons of men become, through grace, the sons of God. God loves his children with a special, peculiar, and unchanging love. He values his children, therefore he chastens them. He looks upon them not as brambles, but as vines; therefore he prunes them that they may bear much fruit. He looks upon them as precious grain, therefore he winnows away the chaff by the driving winds of affliction. He looks upon them not as the dust of the earth, but as gold that must be purified by fire; as jewels that must be ground upon the lapidary's wheel.

Think of the chastening. It is diversified in its nature. Some are chastened in their persons; some in their business, and others in their families. Some are chastened in a multitude of ways. God has many of rods, and he makes his own selections. It is best that he should do so. The chastening may be severe. Some times he even "scourgeth." The heavy strokes may fall; the flesh may quiver with pain; the aching heart may bleed. We may even have to say with David: "The Lord hath chastened me sore; but he hath not given me over unto death." Yet the Lord never gives one stroke too many, nor allows us to be tempted and tried any more than we are able to bear. There is a "needsbe," for every sorrow; "if need be ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." There is no escape—no exemption. He "scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." It was so of old; it is the same still. Every child bears the mark of sorrow. Pain is in the Christian's inventory. Thus the record runs: "In the world ye shall have tribulation." The remark of the Puritan is striking and true; "God has had one Son without sin, but no son without sorrow." Even Christ was "stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him and with his stripes we are healed."

Think of the chastener. It is the Lord himself. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth—He scourgeth." "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." He keeps the rod in his own hand. No creature holds it. Chastening is God's work, not man's, not even an angel's. Earthly friends are not acquainted with us as God is. "He knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are but dust." Angels cannot enter into our feelings as God can. Chastening

is as much the work of the Lord as creation or redemption. God is our Father. Parents are jealous for their children's comfort. No stranger hand must strike them. The duty of correcting belongs to them. They alone have the right to chasten. God, our heavenly Father, has transferred that right to no one else. He chastens wisely. He cannot err. His work is perfect. A young Physician, smitten down in the midst of his usefulness, comforted himself and his anxious friends as the wing of the death-angel darkened his chamber, thus: "God makes no mistakes." A mistake is utterly impossible on the part of God. "There is no searching of his understanding." "His understanding is infinite." His ways are always right. He chastens feelingly. Whilst the rod is in his hand pity is in his heart. "He does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men." He never smites when a word or a look will do. He uses no unnecessary severity. It grieves him to pain us. He asks: "Why should ye be stricken any more?" Surely "As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." All the time he is chastening us there is kindness in his conduct, tenderness in his tones, and compassion in his eye. "Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of great mercy." Perhaps the tenderness of God is never more apparent than in times of affliction. Have we been afflicted? Does the Lord condescend to chasten us? Let us not murmur. "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" A calm and holy spirit of submission well becomes us. Murmuring mends nothing. To rebel is to "kick against the pricks." To submit is to enjoy peace. To repine is loss; to acquiesce is gain. Is the draught bitter? It is meant for our good. Would you wave it aside? It would show our folly. "The cup which my Father hath mingled, shall I not drink it?" All, all is well,

"If but my fainting heart be blest With thy sweet Spirit for its guest, My God to thee I leave the rest; Thy will be done!"

We may rejoice in hope. "God will not always chide." The darkness passeth away. Grief is temporary. "Weeping may endure for a night; joy cometh in the morning." A child of God had a long season of prosperity. He began to be doubtful of his own salvation. He was afraid that God had forsaken him. After a while he was sorely tried. Afflictions came. He met with serious losses. "Ah!" said he, "now I know that the Lord really loves me, or he would not chasten me like this." His hope revived and his "peace flowed like a river." When God's chastening hand is on us we may be assured that he loves us. Every affliction is a pledge of his love. Here is solid ground for faith to build upon. We had better fast on the way to heaven than feast on the way to hell. We may be very sure that the Lord cares for us very much or he would not condescend to chasten us. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

We should be even thankful. Does our Father hold the rod? He might have grasped the sword. "He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." We owe much to affliction. The harvest is indebted to the ploughshare. The falling of the leaves in Autumn is essential to the after-growth of Spring. Affliction is of God. It is of unspeakable value. It is corrective in its tendency; it is sanctifying in its influence. The warrior's gleaming sword is fitted for its work by furnace fires and frequent blows. In order that the vine may be vigorous and fruitful the pruning knife must be freely used, and the ripening grapes exposed to air and sun. Our "Father is the husbandman. . . Every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth that it may bring forth more fruit." "Thankful for affliction!" do you say? Yes. Just look at God's design. He wounds to heal. "Now no chastisement for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness—unto them which are exercised thereby." That fruit abides and is precious in the sight of God. We cannot estimate the benefit of affliction. All our trials may be sanctified by God. They conform us to Christ. They fit us for service. They prepare us for heaven. When we reach our Father's house we shall reckon our afflictions among our greatest mercies and give thanks to him who chastened us in love.

[From the Acadia Athenaeum.]

Socialism.

Gigantic evils are often truths perverted. The most chaotic theory of social life may have a nucleus of order. Socialism is not without its attractive features, especially in its more philosophic and conserving form. It is the avowed enemy of all tyranny—tyranny of rulers, of capital, of race. Looking out on the abysses of humanity, Socialists say that they shall be exalted. The world travails in pain because of poverty. Socialism proclaims an age in which there shall be no poor, no hungry, starving, freezing multitude. Its watchwords are those which sounded from the mouths of French Encyclopedists, and the mob which demolished the Bastille and the Bourbon: Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. It proclaims that it will do what Christianity has failed to do. The church, tested by the achievements and failures of 1800 years, must be pronounced inadequate to the labor of a world-reformation. Therefore let the church perish. There is no Christianity in the mildest form of socialism; there is no God in its extreme form. The right wing is faithless, the left wing is atheistic.

But socialism is not only hostile to Christian faith; it pronounces the constitution of the family, the bond of marriage, to be artificial and unwholesome. The sacredness of home—the holiness of its relations, its sanctities and sanctions, are only the sentimental devices which priest-craft has foisted upon superstition. Let such barriers be broken away. Let there be unlimited room for the action of affinities, let license be unchecked; the passions when left to themselves will run into natural channels, society will be free from the intolerable chains that hang about it only to retard.

By what means and methods does Socialism propose to effect a Reformation? By instrumentalities which change the morals of society? No. Social life is not to be changed by commencing at the centre and working outward; but by commencing at the circumference and working inward. The world is to be regenerated by taking the bread and the gold from the industrious, at the sword's point, if need be, and flinging them to the poor—the lazy—the base—the indolent, wasteful and improvident. Socialism proposes to regenerate the world by making it impossible for a time, that the world should lack sufficient to eat, drink, and wear. All the laws that have hitherto prevailed, laws that run like ocean currents through history; laws by which one is placed above another, because he is superior in mind, in soul, in innate king-hood; laws by which talent, skill, industry, frugality and honesty reap rich harvests, and shiftlessness, laziness, inefficiency and crime reap poverty and pain, are to be abrogated. Society is to be resolved into its rudiments, into a formless elemental condition, and reconstructed on a new basis.

In the new Utopia, there will be no poor; but there will be no rich. Mediocrity will eat the bread of scholarship and genius, laziness will sit in the shade of the tree planted by genius, shiftlessness revel in the riches won by expenditure of heart and brain of the toiler. But in the levelling process, it is not the low that are exalted to the high; it is the high depressed to the low. The mass becomes the standard, there is degradation instead of aspiration. Superior power ceases to work when the superior prizes are no longer possible to the efforts of energy. Socialism says,—"You have, I have not. It is unjust for you to have luxury while I have penury. Therefore divide." But Law says,—"Work and earn. If you won't work, you shall not eat." Socialism says: "I don't choose to work, but I will have. If I cannot get peaceably, I will take by violence." And so against Socialism are arrayed all law and order which have been evolved out of the slow and laborious experiences of the centuries; all the familiar maxims of social life; all the habits and customs formed by processes and mode of existence, all forms of government, from the absolute to the democratic; all genius and skill and ambition which ask only a fair field and no favor; in short all that we have known in life as on the side of law, or as the direct revelation and result of an overruling Providence, is against it. It is a moral gangrene, a disease of the mind precipitated into madness.

From first to last Christianity opposes Socialism. Even on its most plausible platform, the equality of man, there is inevitable hostility. Christianity proclaims that out of one blood God made all the nations of the earth; here is brotherhood and equality, but it is the brotherhood of the soul—it is equality, not on a material but a spiritual basis. It does not say that a king shall have no more power and wealth than a peasant; it says that the rich and poor must render account of their stewardship, according to

their station and equipment. The one renders to Caesar the things which are Caesar's; the other renders him the dagger and bullet of the assassin. It is likely that Socialism, in whatever form it chooses to work, whether in the bloody shape of red communism, in the conflicts between labor and capital, or in the doctrines of free love, will be the great social problem of the future. Karl Marx, the leader of the secret Socialistic Societies in Europe and North America, looks forward with hopeful prophecy to a bloodless revolution in England and the United States. In Russia and Germany there will be bloodshed. The sword and torch must do what argument and votes cannot do. Socialism does not hesitate to make the incendiary and butcher the Apostles of its creed.

France has more than once been shaken by the mighty movement of these principles. Germany and England have felt the communicated shock. Whether the exigencies of the future will ever develop a speculative, arguing system, into an armed host aggressive, powerful and determined to enforce its principles with the sword, is a question on which uncertainties rest. Knowledge is becoming more widely diffused; the conditions of life are becoming less harsh and rigorous. The strife between employer and employed will be subdued in the progress of Christian charity. In the last century Socialism fought a brief spasmodic struggle. But nature recoiled from the worship of a prostitute; humanity, deceived for a space, sought God once more. Surely in a century celebrated for every form of freedom, for fearless and severe thought, for scientific advance, and loyalty to the Bible, we need not fear any permanent triumph of such a monstrosity as Socialism.

Criticism Extraordinary.

A correspondent of a leading journal has taken in hand "a suburban pastor" who he says, "is one of our best sermonizers," but who is given to much noise in the pulpit. The critic said he took his seven-year-old boy to hear the said pastor. On asking said boy how he liked the preacher (it is well to ask such questions of the children; considerate parents always do it; it helps to impress them with a due sense of their own importance, and the preacher's insignificance, and prepares them early for the chief function of an audience, viz., to criticize the sermon), he replied, "Not very well. What made him speak so loud? Why didn't he talk just as I am talking to you?"

Sure enough, why didn't he? Why didn't Demosthenes and Cicero do it? Why didn't Augustine, and Luther, and Wesley do it? Why don't Beecher and Talmage and Moody do it? And Daniel Webster, Edward Everett, and Rufus Choate, why didn't they speak in public as a seven-year old pet talks to his papa? Possibly one reason is that there was something in their style of thought, and therefore of expression, a little above the range of a nice boy of seven years. Possibly another reason is, that there is a perceptible difference between public speaking and domestic colloquy. And perhaps the seven-year-old himself would be heard speaking very differently when telling a story to a dozen of his mates, or urging them to greater exertions on the ball ground, or defending his rights against an unfair opponent.

The criticism reminds us of a story. A preacher whose audience often reaches a thousand (and that not a thousand miles from the "Hub"), was once called upon to preach in the presence of two brothers, who are also clergymen. At the close both took him to task for his vociferation, declaring that they preferred and practiced a more quiet style.

"And how much do you get for preaching?" he asked.

One answered \$1,200, and the other \$1,600.

"Well," said he, "I get \$4,000 more than both of you. I guess I will keep on 'hol-lering.'"

"Hec fabula docet," etc.

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