

Lutheran Observer.

Wives with proofs of Holy Writ, or with manifest, clear and distinct principles and arguments, I am refuted and convinced, I can and will recant nothing.—Luther.

In Essentials, Unity; in Non-Essentials, Liberty; in all Things, Charity.

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Poetry.

MAXIMUS.

BY ADELAIDE PROCTOR.

I hold him great who, for love's sake,
Can give, with generous, earnest will;
Yet he who takes, for love's sweet sake,
I think I hold more generous still.

I bow before the noble mind
That freely some great wrong forgives
Yet nobler is the one forgiven
Who bears the burden well, and lives.

It may be hard to gain, and still
To keep a lowly steadfast heart;
Yet he who loses has to fill
A harder and a truer part.

Glorious it is to wear the crown
Of a deserved and pure success;
He who knows how to fail has won
A crown whose luster is not less.

Great may he be who can command
And rule with just and tender sway;
Yet is diviner wisdom taught
Better by him who can obey.

Blessed are those who die for God
And earn the martyr's crown of light
Yet he who lives for God may be
A greater conqueror in his sight.

PRAYER.

BY JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE.

Purer yet and purer I would be in mind,
Dearer yet and dearer every duty find;
Hoping still and trusting God without a fear,
Patiently believing He will make all clear.

Calmer yet and calmer in the hours of pain,
Surer yet and surer peace at last to gain;
Suffering still and doing, to His will resigned,
And to God subduing heart, and will, and mind.

Higher yet and higher out of clouds and night,
Nearer yet and nearer, rising to the light—
Light serene and holy, where my soul may rest,
Purified and lowly, sanctified and blest.

Swifter yet and swifter ever onward run,
Firmier yet and firmier step as I go on;
Oft these earnest longings swell within my breast,
Yet their inner meaning ne'er can be expressed,

WINTER.

BY WILLIAM COWPER.

O Winter, ruler of th' inverted year,
Thy scatter'd hair with sleet-like ashes fill'd,
Thy breath congeal'd upon thy lips, thy cheeks
Fring'd with a beard made white with other snows
Than those of age, thy forehead wrapp'd in clouds,
A leafless branch thy sceptre, and thy throne
A sliding car, indebted to no wheel,
But urg'd by storms along its slipp'ry way—
I crown thee king of intimate delights,
Fireside enjoyments, home-born happiness.
And all the comforts that the lowly roof
Of undisturb'd Retirement and the hours
Of long uninterrupted ev'ning know!

Contributions.

CLEAR SHINING AFTER RAIN.

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER, D. D.

One of the numberless touches of exquisite poetry in the Old Testament is that which describes the "tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain." The verdant grass-plot which gladdens the eye is the result of a double process—shower and sunshine. Both are indispensable. We find in this beautiful expression a type of our deepest and richest spiritual experiences. It is a type of the most thorough work of conversion by the Holy Spirit. Over every impenitent soul hangs the dark cloud of God's righteous displeasure; his holy Word thunders against sin, and his threatenings beat like a storm of hail. Repentance and faith in Christ sweep away this cloud; the thunders cease; the face of the atoning, pardoning Saviour looks forth like a clear blue sky after a storm; for there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. No two cases of conversion are exactly similar, yet in every thorough work of grace the darkness and dread which belong to a state of guilt, give place to the smile and peace of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

What is true in the beginnings of the most thorough Christian life is often realized in the subsequent experiences of the believer. Rain and sunshine both play their part in developing godly character. It ought to be a comfort to such of my readers as are under the heavy downpour of trials to open their Bibles and read how it fared with some of God's most faithful children. Abraham toiled on his sorrowful way to Mount Moriah under a dark cloud of apprehension, but the clear shining came when God approved his faith and spared the beloved son Isaac to the father's heart. The successive strokes of trial that burst on the head of Joseph only made his exaltation the more signal when he became prime minister of Egypt. There are forty-one chapters of the Book of Job through which beats the tempest which smote the four corners of his house, but in the forty-second chapter comes the clear shining after rain, and a blaze of restored prosperity. The biographies of Elijah and of Daniel prove how light is sown for the righteous; and the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews is a meteorological record to show how 'faith paints rainbows on thunder clouds.

In our day God often employs stormy providences for the discipline and perfecting of his own people. He knows when we need the drenchings. Every rain-drop has its mission to perform. It goes right down to the roots of the heart, and creeps into every crevice. Not one drop of sorrow, not one tear, but may have some beneficent purpose. The process is not joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness and purity and strength. Christ's countenance never beams with such brightness and beauty as when it breaks forth after a deluge of sorrow; and many a Christian has become a

braver, stronger and holier man or woman for terrible afflictions; there has been a clear shining after rain.

This principle has manifold applications. Sometimes a cloud of unjust calumny gathers over a good man's name; lies darken the air, and it pours falsehoods forty days and forty nights. But when the shower of slander has spent itself, the truth creeps out slowly but surely from behind the clouds of defamation, and the slandered character shines with more luster than ever. The same storm that wrecks a rotten tree only roots the more firmly the sound tree, whose leaves glisten in the subsequent sunshine.

All ye children of God who are under the peltings of poverty, or the downpour of disappointments, or the blizzards of adversity, "think it not strange as though some strange thing had happened unto you." Millions have had the same experience before you. No storm ever drowned a true believer, or washed out the foundations of his hope. The trial of your faith will be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of your Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Two things ought to give you courage. One is that our Lord loves to honor and reward unwavering faith. He permits the storm to test you, and then sends the smile of his sunshine to reward you. Another thought is that the skies are never so brilliantly blue as when they have been washed by a storm. The countenance of Jesus is never so welcome and lovable as when he breaks forth upon us—a sun of consolation and joy after trials.

Long years ago, on a day of thick fog and pouring rain, I ascended a mountain by an old bridle-path over the slippery rocks. A weary, disappointed company we were when we reached the cabin on the summit. But toward evening a mighty wind swept away the bank of mist, the body of the blue heavens stood out in its clearness, and before us was revealed the magnificent landscape stretching away to the sea. That scene was at the time, and has often been since, a sermon to my soul. It taught me that faith's stairways are over steep and slippery rocks; often through blinding storms; but God never loses his hold on us, and if we endure to the end, he will yet bring us out into the clear shining after rain.

So it's better to hope though the clouds run low,
And to keep the eye still lifted;
For the clear blue sky will soon peep through
When the thunder-cloud is rifted.

THE EXPECTED REVIVAL.

BY M. RHODES, D. D.

During the year just closed there have been many predictions, and happily some indications, of an expected revival. The need is serious to all who read and have breadth of vision. Withal, this greatly desired quickening tarries. Whilst it is not for us to set times when God shall visit his people, but to wait patiently for him, yet there is sufficient in this seeming delay to stimulate inquiry. Any proper effort to discover the causes of this delay will be profitable. We must not forget the changes which have followed each other in such rapid succession, and which in some instances have been so radical that one needs caution lest we misinterpret them. While the last year has been decidedly marked, if what we read from all parts of the world be true, with a wide-spread religious indifference, yet there never has been in our history such a benevolent ministry, nor one so varied in its application to human need as during the year just closed. In the Church, also, it is easy to trace a noble record in work done and in money laid on God's altar. Of course, in all objective service one must be careful to discriminate between the giving that honors God, and the giving that puts the crown on self. There is a vast amount of self-righteousness, rather than of self-

sacrifice, in the giving of our time. It is far easier for many to give than it is to be prayerful, humble and spiritually minded, which is life. Still there is nothing more becoming, as we enter 1904, than the spirit of devout thanksgiving to God. Our mercies are many beyond our deserving.

What seems to be lacking is to be found in the more spiritual ministries and mission of the Church. It is beyond question the work of the Church to win souls to Christ, and to build them up in the kingdom of God. Setting aside what is manifestly superficial, the record of the past few years is not assuring. Here, again, we must be careful not to find our estimate in numbers. Our Lord never did any counting. The test is life and power. Speaking generally, there has been a sad depletion in attendance upon church ordinances, in family religion, in the observance of God's rest day, in faith and reverence, so essential to all true Christian character and life, as well as lack of confidence in, and respect for God's word, without which it is neither real nor helpful to any one; all of these have quite gone out of the conscious life of a multitude, while the desecration of the marriage relation has made our nation notorious among the peoples of the world. What wonder, if this verdict be correct, there should have been awakened in earnest souls a yearning, a tremendous spirit of intercession for the awakening of the Church and for the salvation of the world. Wherefore the delay?

First of all, there is a lack of confidence in the Church. Right or wrong, many outside have ceased to look upon our churches as marked illustrations of godliness and self-sacrifice in daily life, or as welcome asylums for the poor and the oppressed and lost. Has the Church come to be pronouncedly a "mixed multitude?" Certainly God never is, never will be without a witness, but is there not a sad lack of any considerable testimony, so essential to the Church's life and power? When the cure of souls is scant, only occasional, is there not ground for believing that the care for souls is also scant? Has the Church to-day that power in secular, social, and political life she must have if she would win for God at the altar of prayer and in the ministries of the sanctuary? Is her generous giving a recognition of Christian stewardship, a really spiritual service calling down straightway the promised blessing of God, or is it for many only a toleration, a custom, a thing without spiritual significance and desire? All honor to those noble spirits who are examples of the surrendered life, and to whom all this is a real joy, and unto him who loved them and gave himself for him, still these questions are not out of place in trying to discover some causes of our spiritual leanness. We will all be profited by giving them our personal and serious thought. We shall have no revival until the standard of righteousness goes up in the Church. When we begin to rend our hearts, not our garments, then, and not till then, will God open the windows of heaven in needed blessing.

Another hindrance to the expected revival is the response among many to the god of pleasure. "Lovers of pleasure more than God." Of these there are many in the Church. It includes the whole range of useless and wasteful indulgences. There are few things that contribute more to the practical atheism of our time. In our cities it robs the people—I should rather say God—of the rest day and the sanctities of worship. More and more it has invaded the country districts, until in many towns the house of God is given up for the excursion at low rates for an outing with the world. This is the beaten, crowded path to easy forgetfulness of God and the profanation of holy vows. It is one of the great hindrances to the progress of the gospel. These and other causes easily account for that spiritual indifference to God's claims upon men, which soon leads to a positive dislike of everything spiritual.