

hear the sound of that musketry; it is as if the bullets were tearing my own brain." We said Romance, we ought to have said Tragedy. "In such manner rushes down the curtain on them and their affair; they vanish thus on a sudden; swept away as in black clouds of fate."

Sterling's various flights to milder climes in search of health are duly chronicled, and some of the brightest bits in the book are his descriptions of life in foreign lands; whether it is in the account of the terrible hurricane on the Island of St. Vincent, or in the descriptions of life in modern Rome, we find him always the same active, intelligent spirit, struggling against sorrow with much real faith.

Carlyle condemns Sterling's action in becoming a curate of the Church of England, and likens it to that of "a bereaved young lady who has taken the veil." Neither will he accept ill-health as the cause of the retirement from that position after eight months' earnest and conscientious work. This we do not propose to discuss, as it is peculiarly a matter which belongs to the man's most secret life; but we question whether the biographer would stand very well the cold scorching analysis which he here gives to his friend. Of his preaching, this is Carlyle's deliberate judgment: "The discourse, delivered with a grave sonorous composure, and far surpassing in talent the usual run of sermons, had withal an air of human veracity, as I still recollect, and bespoke dignity and piety of mind; but gave me the impression rather of artistic excellence than ofunction or inspiration in that kind." Sterling retained to the last a keen interest in the deeper theological questions and flashed out strong indignation at Carlyle's contemptuous reference to "Pantheism and Pottheism;" he had also some independence of judgment, shown by his refusal to bow down before the great Goethe, regarding him as "an intensely pagan life when it is men's duty to be Christians." This was no doubt modified, as it needed to be; but his whole treatment of the subject shows that he did not passively accept the Master's teaching on this important point.

John Sterling did not achieve any great literary success, in fact he seems to have received less than his merits in that particular; and he failed as to the one great ambition of his life, namely, in his efforts after high poetic expression. "Why sing your bits of thought, if you can contrive to speak them? Besides I had to observe there was in Sterling intrinsically no depth of tune; which surely is the real test of a poet or singer as distinguished from a speaker." In spite of this opinion and advice the young man keeps on making and polishing his verses. Those who desire specimens can find them in Stedman's "Victorian Anthology," or elsewhere.

His life darkens towards its close, and yet faith was not utterly cast down. Within two hours mother and wife were snatched away from him. To his mother he had written, "I seem so sure of a love that shall last and reunite us that even the remembrance, painful as that is, of all my own follies and ill-temper, cannot shake this faith." His last letters to his children are full of beauty and pathos. The Bible was to the end full of sweetness and power to him, and at the close, all he could say was "I tread the common road into the great darkness without any thought of fear and with very much of hope." A troubled life driven about in the intellectual currents of this restless century, yet strong to hold fast the essence of the Christian faith. When we have pondered its significance as the life of a fellow mortal facing the common sorrows and meeting the most subtle temptations, we have felt the growing conviction that the questions which it raises, and the needs which it reveals, are only met in the life and love of Him who, having met all sin and sorrow in the name of God and man, was able to look up in the last dread hour and say to His Father, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do."

WOMAN'S LIFE AND WORK ON THE PRAIRIE.

[The following letter from an active Presbyterian lady living on the prairie in Manitoba, though not just very recent, loses none of its interest or freshness on that account, and gives a lively and vivid picture of active Christian life on the prairie.—ED.]

MR. EDITOR,—I am startled to find that it is six weeks since I got your kind letter. I knew it was a long time, but had no idea till I sat down to answer it that it was nearly so long. The truth is that the days seem all too short for the work one has to do up here. And yet our days on the prairie last from half-past four or five o'clock in the morning until say ten at night. I mean the hours in which we are busy, not the actual hours of daylight, for there is very little night here at this time of the year.

Let me say to you what I have often said to others, "I have enjoyed reading my CANADA PRESBYTERIAN, and have found much in it to help me personally and also to furnish information for missionary meetings." May (you remember her?) looks regularly through the Christian Endeavor column for gleanings for her meetings, and many a lovely bit of poetry have we cut out and either kept or given to those we thought might be helped by them. Just last Sunday, as we drove home from Sunday school, she reminded me of something that took place when she was a little tot in —. One Sunday she was looking through THE PRESBYTERIAN and she threw it aside impatiently, saying she wondered why there never was anything in it for little children. She says I told you what she had remarked, and you sent her a parcel of lovely papers, which she never forgot about. And since then she has often noticed what lovely things are in the children's page of that paper, but she does not know whether her childish remark had anything to do with what she hailed as a great improvement.

I wish I could write something worth while for THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN. But I am just overwhelmed with home work and Sunday school work, not to speak of the Woman's Foreign Mission Society and hospital work. I often write hurriedly for the Woman's Foreign Mission meetings, but I have no time to polish anything up. Generally, I prefer to speak without notes if I have thought any subject out.

I always meant to tell you about our little mission church out here on the prairie. It is called Zion Church, and is about four and a half miles west of our home. We have a missionary who has charge of three other stations as well. One Sunday we have Sunday school before the morning service and the next after service which is in the afternoon of every second Sunday. There are two classes of younger scholars, and all the rest are in the Bible class, which I have taken charge of since it was organized. It is a fine class, attentive and regular in attendance. The majority of the members are young men, but quite a number are young women and several are married men and women.

How would you city folks like to leave home at ten o'clock and not get back till half past two? More than that, get up at six or seven o'clock to get your work done before starting? Many of you grumble if you are kept much over an hour in church on Sunday morning. Then on Monday evening comes Christian Endeavor, meeting and I can say this society is one of the most earnest, thoroughly alive, eager to learn and to put to practical use any I ever came across. There are over thirty active and a dozen associate members, and the meetings are delightful. Mission work has been taken up, and one half-year's giving went to the Jews in Palestine, another to the Indian work in the North-West. And they have found, as do all who study missions and help them, that their own Christian life and the life of their society have both been deepened and brightened thereby.

We have had the Gospel in its simplicity, and therefore in its power, preached to us faithfully. Since I have attended this little church, I have been confirmed in what was previously my belief, that what we all need from the pulpit is the pure and simple gospel message. And oh! how it does reach every need of every soul if faithfully given. We want the message of the living God, not the surmises and theories of men, no matter how clever or how interesting these may be.

There is one thing I would like to say about a matter I noticed in your columns. I refer to the hardship of students in charge of a congregation not being able to partake of the Lord's Supper with their people. How hard it seems to be for any of us to put ourselves in others' places! At least it requires a good deal of training for most of us to acquire this very desirable faculty. Think of a man being deemed thoroughly capable of preaching the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ to people, and yet he may not dispense the communion, but must get some ordained minister to do it for him while he preaches in that minister's stead. Thus the missionary may be many months, without having an opportunity of fulfilling this one of his Lord's commands. Our present missionary is ordained, but the last one we had said that no one but himself could tell how much he missed through not having this privilege.

I was asked to give a short talk lately on mission literature, and I may send a few lines on that subject to you.

Very sincerely yours,
JESSIE McEWEN.

A GIRL'S FAMILIAR FRIEND.

Ruth Ashmore, in summarizing her paper on "A Girl's Familiar Friend"—girl friend—in *July Ladies' Home Journal*, offers this wise counsel: "Have a friend, but guard your friendship and your friend as you would a crystal vase." Once the crystal vase is broken, all the careful mending in the world can never make it as it was, and once there has come in your friendship the words that jarred, the actions that were unkind, and the looks that seem to cut like a knife, the friendship, like the beautiful vase, can never be as it was. And what is a girl without a girl friend? She stands alone. Men think that she must differ from other women, and that there must be something about her less sweet and less feminine than that which prevades her sisters. I am a believer in the girl friend. Any girl can, with very little trouble, gain the admiration of a man, but it takes something finer, something better, and something more charming to attract a woman, and to make and keep her a friend. In all the history of the world there is nothing so fine as the friendship of women; whether it be given to men or whether it be given to women, it stands out magnificent, unselfish, sympathetic and Christlike—when it is the right kind of friendship. You will remember that to Him who was without sin, the joy, the beauty and the sympathy of friendship was known, and that it was a woman who was a friend, who stood by Mary watching, until the tragedy of the cross had ended, and waiting until the glory of the resurrection had begun."

Professor Huxley, one of the most eminent men of science, pleading in the School Board for the Bible as the best source of the highest education for children, said that he knew of no other book in all the world's wide literature, by which the religious feeling, which is the essential base of conduct, could be kept up; and he asked, "By what other book could children be so humanised and made to feel that each figure in the historical procession fills, like themselves, but a momentary interval between the two eternities, and earns the blessings or curses of all time, according to its efforts to do good and hate evil, even as they also are earning payment for their work."

Teacher and Scholar.

BY REV. A. J. MARTIN, TORONTO.

July 12th 1896. **DAVID KING OVER ALL ISRAEL.** } 2 Sam. v. 1-12.

GOLDEN TEXT.—2 Sam. v. 10.
MEMORY VERSES.—10-12.
CATECHISM.—Q. 60.

HOME READINGS.—M. 2 Sam. iii. 1-21.
T. 2 Sam. iii. 22-39. W. 2 Sam. iv. 1-12.
Th. 2 Sam. v. 1-12. F. 2 Sam. v. 13-25.
S. 1 Chron. xii. 23-40. *Sab. Ps. i. 1-12.

David's reign in Hebron extended over a period of seven and a half years. Ish-bosheth, the leader of Saul's house, and his recognized heir, found his cause growing weaker and weaker. Finally, through a quarrel between him and Abner, as detailed in our home-readings, his cause met with its downfall. Abner made overtures to David, offering to throw in his strength with David's cause, to give him the whole land. Through this David secured his wife Michal, Saul's daughter, and therefore some recognizable claim to Saul's throne. Abner's foul murder, and the assassination of Ish-bosheth soon followed, not however through David's connivance. Thus the way was opened for the elders of Israel, as representing the tribes, to approach David in Hebron, and enter into league with him as king over all Israel. Our lesson for this week has to do with the initial actions of David after he had been accepted by the whole nation. Perhaps we can best group our thoughts about the people's confidence in David, and David's proof of his worthiness.

I. The People's Confidence in David.—Doubtless the people of the northern tribes were glad of an excuse to approach David. It must have been in a most heartless way they carried on the war by which Ish-bosheth sought to regain Judah. They could not but be struck by the contrast between the heedless self-seeking of the house of Saul, and the loving consideration of Judah's chosen. The latter sought to avoid fighting, treated his enemies with great kindness, and showed that the welfare of the people was of greater concern to him than his own aggrandisement. Thus David had won the hearts of the northern tribes even before Abner's death. The words of the representative elders show this. They would gladly accept him as their king, because he was one of themselves, not an alien usurper. They had good proof of his prowess when he had led Israel's armies under King Saul. They recognized from what they had seen and heard of his seven years' rule over Judah, that he had learned of God the true idea of a king. He had learned that the true king is a shepherd of his people, that is seeks not to obtain from the people all he can for himself, but seeks rather to lead with wise counsel, and gentle yet firm hand, to greater and better things for the people themselves. Therefore they were ready to enter into a compact with him, and he was anointed king over Israel. It is a blessed thing for a people when their rulers are shepherds rather than wolves. It is a glorious thing for the Kingdom of God, the Church of Jesus Christ, that our King is the Good Shepherd who lay down His life for the sheep, the Good Shepherd who has pledged Himself; "lo! I am with you always unto the end of the age." Shall not every scholar in our Sabbath schools make a league with King Jesus, and anoint Him King over heart and life and all?

II. The Proof of David's Worthiness.—No sooner did David receive the crown of the whole nation, than he set himself to give proof of his wise and judicious kingship. Hebron he thought unsuited for his capital, both because too far from the centre of his kingdom, and as identified with his reign over only a section of the people. Therefore he sought a new capital, and found one in the city called Jebus. The stronghold of that city was still in the hands of the Jebusites, whom God had promised to drive out from before Israel. These enemies of God and His people believe their stronghold impregnable, and jeered at David and his men, declaring that even the blind and the lame could hold the citadel against them. The hill now called Zion was then over a hundred feet higher than the surrounding city, and had on three sides of it deep valleys and precipitous rocks. David however was not daunted, and soon detected an unguarded point. Then up the watercourse he incited his soldiers to go. The stronghold was taken and a city added to the Lord's possessions. The city of David, Jerusalem, the place which God chose out of all the tribes to put his name there. Here was an ideal spot for his capital, both from its natural strength and because it was on the border line between the north and the south, being partly in Benjamin and partly in Judah. This place David fortified. Then he entered into league with many of the princes around him, cementing some of these alliances, alas, by marrying heathen wives. Then, recognizing that God had established him king over Israel, and exalted his kingdom for his people Israel's sake, David gave himself to conquest, and to the establishment of the religion of Jehovah throughout his dominions, as furnishing that righteousness which is alone the only true basis of a nation's greatness. Thus David showed his worthiness of the people's confidence. It will be a glorious thing for Canada when we recognize that under our form of government it is the people who are king, and set ourselves to put in power and office only men who believe that God has exalted them to these positions of honour and trust for Canada's sake.