



The Parting of the Ways.

AN OLD MAN'S STORY.

(Mary G. Crocker, in 'Christian Work'.)

The partin' o' the ways? Well, stranger, yes,
Thet left-hand road'll take ye straight to town
Ez straight ez ye kin get, I ruther guess,
But won't ye rest a bit and set ye down?
I know which way them roads go, ye kin bet,
Fur I've had cause to know 'em. 'Twas this way—
Mebbe ye won't mind listnin', as ye set,
To an old tale I don't tell every day.

I don't tell everybody, stranger, no,
For most folks wouldn't noways care to hear
A poor old man go pratin' on, and so
I haven't told it now fur many a year.
But it was this way: Me and Nancy Brown
Had been a-keeping company a year,
When we got hitched, sir, yes, an' settled down
In this same little cottage ye see there.

An' happy! well, I ruther guess we was;
An' Nancy, with her lovin', gentle ways,
Went singin' 'round the house ez wild birds does,
Too happy fur much talkin' in them days.
Too happy, but it couldn't last. There came
An awful shadow into Nancy's eyes.
'Twas all along o' me. I was to blame
Fur all them sleepless nights, an' tears an' sighs.

Ye must ha' seen it ez ye came along—
The tavern, standin' where the two roads part;
Well, it was that ez made all go wrong,
An' it was that was breakin' Nancy's heart!
Well, one bright day, when harvest-time was past,
When Nancy's baby looked up into my face,
I said, God helpin' me, I've spent the last
I'll ever spend in that soul-cursing place.

But mebbe, stranger, ye don't know how strong
A grip the devil sometimes gets on men;
Mebbe ye don't know, but it wasn't long—
I'd found the partin' o' the ways again,
And things went on, ez bad ez bad could be,
All through the winter, an' one summer night
All warm an' full of perfume, there was me,
A-coming from the tavern, an' a sight.

Stranger, I saw I never kin forget;
Nancy had come to meet me an' she stood
There at the bars, in white, I see her yet,
And in her arms the boy so sweet an' good.
But I,—my brain was crazed, stranger, I think—
An' I know what I say—I've cause to know—
The devil himself was in me, fur the drink
Made me a fiend an' not a man, and so

I struck at Nancy standing there so sweet,
So sweet and pretty in her muslin gown,
And there she fell right at my very feet,
My little Nancy, I had knocked her down.
I thought I'd killed her, an' the curse o' Cain

I felt was on me, for I'd sobered then,
An' startin' off, I ran, my maddened brain
Drivin' me fur from every haunt of men.

All night I laid an' fought an awful fear
There in the woods, and all the fiends o' hell
Fought for my guilty soul. Sir, I could hear
Them ravin' round with shout an' jeer an' yell.
The mornin' came. I staggered to my feet
An' tried to find the way home. Oh, thet day!
The sun shone, an' the birds sung loud an' sweet,
And all the earth was blossomin' with May.

An' right across the fields I saw my home,
An' started toward it. Not a sign o' life,
An' nobody to meet me when I come.
Why should there be ef I had killed my wife?
No, stranger, no, don't start so, I was not,
Thank God, a murderer, but goin' in
There I saw Nancy kneeling by the cot
Thet held the baby. No, no! not thet sin.

But one well-nigh ez black—the boy was lame,
Was lame fur life, an' I hed done it, too;
An' there I stood in all my sin and shame
An' Nancy lifted up her eyes so blue
An' looked at me. Her face was white and set,
Her voice was cold and hard. 'Stephen,' says she—
Thet awful look I never shall forget—
'Stephen, may God furgive ye! As fur me,

'I kin ef He kin, but the baby there,
Will never walk again, long ez he lives.
Oh, Stephen! Stephen! go to God in prayer
And ask him if such sins He e'er fergives!
I think thet God forgave me, fur ye know
He saves them to the uttermost that come,
Even with sech black sins as mine was.
Yes, an' so
Peacefuller days came to our little home.

Fur the strong demon Drink never again
Set foot inside it; but thet couldn't take
Away the memory of the awful pain,
The dreadful guilt and shame, and couldn't make
Our poor lame baby well again. Poor dear,
He went, ere long, to where the lame kin run
An' not be weary. More than forty year
He's been there in the land o' fadeless sun.

Stranger, taint often thet ye see the tears
Run down the cheeks of men ez old ez I;
No, an' I hope it may be many years
Before ye see one with sech cause to cry.
But I won't keep ye longer with my talk;
Keep to the left-hand road, sir, all the way;
And, stranger, may God give ye grace to walk
A straighter road than I did. Well,
good-day!

Correspondence

LETTER TO THE BOYS AND GIRLS, SCRIPTURE SEARCHERS.

Dear Boys and Girls,—Some of you seem to find it quite puzzling to find those verses, and most of you got them nearly all right; but we were pleased to see that there were perfect answers sent in. This next set of verses will be found more difficult still. However it may be with girls, most boys like hard things to do better than easy, so we may expect to see their names this coming month in the list of the successful. All answers should be in before the first of October.—Ed.

REVISED QUOTATIONS FROM THE I. EPISTLE OF ST. PETER FOR SCRIPTURE SEARCHERS.

1. Yet you believe in him, and exult with a triumphant happiness too great for words.

2. Ransomed from the aimless life in which you were brought up.

3. Keep your daily life among the heathen strictly upright.

4. A woman's attractions should not depend on such external things as the arrangement of her hair.

5. Use in mutual service such gifts as you have each received, dispensing faithfully God's many-sided generosity.

6. He makes you his care.

7. If when you are doing right you take your sufferings patiently, that is beautiful in God's eyes.

Moulmein, Burma.

Dear Editor,—I have received the 'Northern Messenger' for over, a year now through the 'Postal Crusade,' and I must say I enjoy it very much. There is some fine reading in the paper. I think it was Mrs. Cole who proposed that I should write to you, that was long ago. Mrs. Leslie wrote to me also. I should like to write to her, and tell her how much I appreciate the papers sent to me, only I have mislaid her letter and so cannot get her address. I pass the papers on when I am done with them. If you think it would interest any of the boys and girls to know of the life out here I will gladly send an account of it. There are a great many missionaries in this station, some from the Karens, some for the Talaings and Burmese, etc. I must thank Miss Amanda Millar for the great budget of papers she sent me lately. I am afraid I shall have to end right here, as the dusk creeps up very early here, and it is already too dark to write any more.

MARY H.

(We will be glad to hear from you again.—Ed.)

Exploits, Nfld.

Dear Editor,—I am sending the texts which I saw in your paper a short time ago. I think it would be nice to have some texts to find out every week. It is a nice way to study the Bible. Mother showed the verses to me one morning, and told me to find them out, so I commenced, and in less than half an hour I had it finished. I hope that there will be some more in the paper next week. I like to be finding them out. I read the whole book of James through first, then began at the beginning again. I like the continued story in the 'Messenger,' 'A Fight Against Odds.' I enjoyed my holidays very much. We are to have a new teacher this year.

ANNIE G. T.

(How many of the readers will try to send in answers regularly if we have a set of Bible questions every week.—Ed.)

Winnipeg, Man.

Dear Editor,—I am a little boy, eleven years old. I go to school, and am in grade six. I read a great deal, and I like best of all the Henty books. Winnipeg is a very nice city, but its streets are very muddy in the spring. I have a great many pets, and as I like animals, I would not hurt them for anything. I had three rabbits called Joe, Pinktail and Bunny, but they died. I like the 'Northern Messenger' very much. My papa took the 'Northern Messenger' when he was a little boy, when he lived in Ontario. EDDIE K.

Rose Bay, N.S.

Dear Editor,—I have never written a letter to the 'Messenger' before. I read all the letters in it, and I am very much interested. This is the second year I am taking the 'Messenger,' and I like it very much. I go to school every day, and am in the fifth book. There is a beach near my home, where we go digging clams, and go in bathing. I have one brother, aged nine years, and one sister, aged seven. Their names are John and Amy. Amy has lots of dolls. She has another little girl with her now, helping to make hats for them. There are three churches near my home, Lutheran, Presbyterian and Methodist. I go to the Lutheran church and Sunday-school. I am eleven years of age, and my birthday is on September 8. LAWRENCE H.