



NEARER.

THE lake is near—its water's sleeping  
 Glassy and still and sweet;  
 Or else in gentlest ripples creeping  
 Upwards to lave our feet,  
 Yet nearer than the blue wave's play,  
 Is God's great love to us to-day.

The streams are near—as onward ever  
 The torrent rushes on;  
 Each moment fresh, yet staying never,  
 Another, yet the same;  
 But nearer still that stream Divine,  
 Ready to fill your heart and mine.

The hills are near—as if they waited  
 Some message to impart:  
 So still and solemn, as if freighted  
 With blessings to our hearts;  
 Nearer, yet nearer, every hour,  
 Our Saviour's presence and His power.

Wearied, then let nature teach thee,  
 Thou art not left alone;  
 And God's own voice through nature reach thee,  
 With lessons of His own—  
 Of love and tenderness and care,  
 Which He hath meant it to declare.

M. F. M.

DO YOU READ THE BIBLE?

TWO Mongol Tartars came from the frontier of China to St. Petersburg, that they might learn European manners. During their residence there they were asked by a German missionary to assist him in translating the New Testament into their language; and they then came every day to spend some time in his study.

When the work was finished, and the book lay on

the table, the two Tartars remained grave and silent. The pastor inquired the reason, and was rejoiced to find that they had become converts to Christianity.

"We have studied," said they, "in our own country the sacred books of the Chinese, and the more we read, the more obscure they seemed, but the more we read the Gospel, the more easy and simple we find it, till it has seemed as if Jesus Christ Himself condescended to converse with us."

How is it, then, that you who have been born and brought up in the midst of Christian civilisation find so much obscurity in the Bible? Perhaps, disdaining that which is plain, you have curiously sought out the difficult passages, and, being unable to explain them, have complained that the whole Bible is beyond your comprehension. You have thus committed a double error. First in using the Bible as if it were a book of problems intended only to flatter your vanity, and also in neglecting the more for the less important. To whom shall I compare you? You are like a man with abundance of wholesome food at hand, yet dying of hunger because he is obstinately determined to eat only extraordinary viands.

Let us remember always that the chief thing is a sincere and willing heart. Without this, that which is most clear becomes dark, and the "light of the morning," according to the expression of Job, "is turned into the shadow of death." When the heart stands in the way of the mind, covering it with a thick veil, that it may give itself up securely to its own evil passions, there is no longer anything plain in the Bible. A diseased eye closes itself to the rays of the sun, and would rather see nothing than be hurt by the light of day. Is it that the sun is darkened? No, it is the eye which is at fault. Do you desire to penetrate into the true meaning of the Bible? Ask God to make you love it, and incline your heart to obey it. Then you will understand it, and as you understand it you will love it more and more.

In reviewing your objections, not one will bear a serious examination. You would not have courage to defend them before your own conscience when it is calm and unprejudiced. You would not mention them on your dying bed, for in the face of death you would have some regard for the truth. You could not repeat them before the sovereign Judge; for God, who never lies, will not permit a lie in His presence.

Oh, my fellow-pilgrims on earth, I entreat you all, do not flatter yourselves any longer with these vain subtleties. Read the Scriptures; read them regularly, for they are they which testify of Christ. Whether you read the Bible or not, it will still be what it is, the infallible Word of God.

Whether you acquaint yourselves or not with the truths it reveals, it is this Word which will judge you at the last day. You can, if you are so determined, forget the Bible, but you cannot destroy it. You can turn a deaf ear to it when it cries, Be converted, or you will perish! but you cannot, if not converted, escape the terrible punishment which it denounces. Here blessing and cursing, life and death, are put before you; and God, in His infinite compassion, gives you time to choose.