

Comfort for Bereaved Ones.

A PASTORAL LETTER FROM REV. J. WEBB.

My Dear Bereaved Ones:—I come to you with a message from your best friend. While waiting my Lord's pleasure I heard a voice saying: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." I knew that it was the voice of God for I had heard it before.

I started out on my errand of mercy. I looked around me in this busy, throbbing, hurrying world, and I thought that I heard a low, moanful cry which seemed to come, not from the world which is seen by busy men, or written about in books, or talked of in society,—not from the head of the world which is adorned, or from the face which wears a smile, but from the heart,—from a world within a world. I followed the sound of that cry and it led me into places most sacred, where the footprints of men and women, as spectators, are rarely seen.

I saw in one home a young mother. I heard her merry laugh and her cheerful voice. These were for her friends. Then, when her friends had left the house, she returned slowly, and thoughtfully, to her chamber. When she had gently closed the door she sat down by the side of an empty cot, and there she wept and wept. I heard her say in voice so pitiful, "O why did death come and take away my sweet angel child?"

I asked: Is there no one to tell that poor mother that there is a great, kind physician who can heal the wound which death has made? Is there no one to tell her that there is a Friend, nearer than all other friends, on whose loving breast she can lean her weary head, in whose ear she can tell her trouble, and from whom she can receive the sympathy that her poor heart needs? The voice said: "Go ye."

Poor weeping mother; look up from that empty cot, look through those tears and you will see One who can bind up your sorrow-stricken heart, One who sympathizes with you in your bereavement,—it is Jesus. Can you not hear the echo of those words spoken many years ago: "Suffer the children to come unto me?" Will it not comfort you to learn that the Good Shepherd "gathers the lambs with his arm, and folds them to his bosom?" Cannot you hear the baby voice calling to you saying: "Come this way mama. Everything is so beautiful in this my new home? Do you not realize that you have a treasure laid up in heaven? Just write over that empty cot: "Not lost, but only gone a little while before."

I saw a dear child of fifteen. Though young in years she seemed to lack that elasticity of step that belongs to youth. She tried hard to appear cheerful and bright. As her companions skipped off for home and mother she looked troubled and turned slowly toward home. Unseen, I followed. There was no mother's voice to greet her with, "I'm so glad that you have come home, dearie." I saw that little one fall, tired and comfortless, into the vacant chair. I heard her say: "I do so wish that my mother were here. There is so much that I would like to tell her. I feel so lonely without her." Then she bowed her head and wept. She wept the tears that only those who have lost a mother weep.

My heart ached for her. I asked: "Is this poor motherless child to be left all alone to weep and moan her young life away? Is there no one to say a word of comfort to soothe this troubled soul?" And the voice said: "Go ye."

My dear young sister, let me speak a word in your ear as you sit there weeping. Your dear mother is gone from your home. Your eyes fill with tears as you read the motto: "What is home without a mother?" I have come to bring you a word of comfort—of good news. "What is it?" It is a message from God, and it is this: "God loves you. He wants you to cast all your cares on him. He wants you to come to him and tell him all your troubles." He has sent me to say, "When thy father and thy mother forsake thee, then the Lord will take thee up." It may be that your own dear mother asked Jesus to send this message of comfort to you.

There was no mother in the house of Mary and Martha, and I think that that was why Jesus so often made his home there. Jesus wept with the mourners when Lazarus was taken away from them. Will it not comfort you to know that Jesus sympathizes with you? He will come into your home, and into your life if you will let him. Then, in a few years, he will come and take you to your mother's home, where there will be no more weary, lonely hours.

I saw, standing by a newly made grave, a woman. She had two little children playing by her side; they were too young to understand why their mother wept. She stood, deeply meditating for awhile, and then she stooped down and placed some flowers at the head; and I saw that the flowers glistened with her tears. I heard her say as she turned to leave: "Husband is gone. What shall I do? Life is so dreary without him!" Then I saw that she looked down upon her little ones, and she called them her "poor little fatherless children." Her heart sobbed, and her eyes filled again with tears,

but for their sake I saw that she tried to bear up under the burden of sorrow.

I asked: "Is there no one to speak a word of comfort to that poor heart? Is there no one who will tell her that she can lean upon the strong arm of a kind and loving God? and that he will be a Father to her children?" And the voice said: "Go ye."

Poor Widow:—Listen to the message which I bring to you. It is from One who loves you with a love that is unchanging and stronger than death. He says: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." God is a "Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widow." "The Lord relieveth the fatherless and widow." God knows all about you, and all about your sorrow, and his large, loving heart is moved with compassion toward you. You have been looking down to the grave, and your heart has grown heavy, and your eyes have filled with tears. Lift up your head. The Master stands by your side as he did by Mary's when she knew it not. He will guide you, and protect you, and provide for you. Lift up your eyes from the grave to the skies, and as you look listen to the words of Jesus: "In my Father's house there are many mansions." Can you not see, through the gate which he thus opens, the beautiful city? Do you not hear the rapturous songs? Look, poor sorrow-stricken one, into that Paradise! Follow with your eyes through the gardens and fields and groves and streets. Do you see any mournful countenances there? Ah, no. There is no death, no tears there. Keep all this in view and follow Jesus. Your heart will then grow lighter, and a smile of hope will light up your countenance as you journey toward your heavenly home, where loved ones shall greet loved ones and never, never part again.

As I follow in the way of the mournful sound I see many others who need a word of comfort. I cannot reach them all myself. I am only one of many of God's messengers. God has comfort for all that mourn. This comfort flows through the broken, bleeding heart of a crucified and risen Saviour. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

Trusting that you may accept the comfort sent by God, and praying the "balm of Gilead may be applied by the Great Physician to your wounded hearts—

I remain yours in Christ Jesus,
Kingston Station, N. S. J. WEBB.

From India.

I am sure all the readers of the MESSENGER AND VISITOR, and especially all who contributed money for famine relief, will be glad to hear of the improved condition of things in most of the famine stricken districts in India. In most parts there has been rain more or less abundant, and the people have been able to plant a part, at least, of their usual crops. In some places it is reported that there is too much rain and the planted crops are being destroyed. But this complaint is not heard in many places. There are still districts where the rain fall has been very light and where famine still continues. On the greater part of our mission field there has been a good rain fall lately, but at Bobbili and in the neighborhood it has been very light, and quite a large part of the rice land is unplanted. Still on the whole the outlook is much more hopeful than a month since. Prices are beginning to fall a little but are still very high, and poor people find it hard to live by the little work they can find to do. How they lived at all is a perpetual mystery to me. Mrs. Churchill with her Bible women, visiting the homes of the people, finds women of a respectable class who would never think of asking for help, almost without food or clothes.

Though they are not absolutely starving, she feels justified in helping them somewhat from famine money. Our Christians, too, on the money they receive, find it hard to merely live on common food, and have very little to procure decent clothes. So we have felt that it was right to help them some in this respect. But most of the money sent to us for famine relief has gone directly to famine stricken districts, we have some still on hand. Until just lately we had so little rain that there was serious danger of famine on some parts of our field, so we did not feel justified in sending away all the money in our hands at once. But now that the danger seems past we shall soon send most of the remainder to famine districts, for though the worst pinch of famine is over there is pressing need of help in many directions. Perhaps I cannot do better than quote briefly from some of the letters received in reply to money sent. One from Rev. Mr. Adams of Bilaspur, will give a good idea of how the money is spent.

"DEAR BRO. CHURCHILL.—I acknowledge with thanks the receipt of the cheque for Rs. 100. It is very kind of you to give us aid and sympathy in this famine relief work. Our work is as free from gratuitous help as we can make it. We have road making, stone quarrying, rescue of orphans, feeding of those unable to work, erection of some buildings connected with the mission, as part of our work in Bilaspur. Some aid has been given to cultivators."

M. D. ADAMS.
Another from Rev. Mr. Chute, Palmoor, of the American Baptist Union, gives more of an insight into famine experiences.

"We are exceedingly grateful for the Rs. 200 which you sent for famine relief. The poor people on our field have suffered much from famine, notwithstanding the efforts we have made to relieve them and many have died, the majority of whom were children. The cholera was raging in the cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad for three months before it came to Palmoor, and we hoped that we might escape it altogether. But it came at last to Palmoor. Our famine camp was a mile from the town. Many people were dying in the town with it for two weeks before it was communicated to the famine camp. But a party came from the town and buried a dead body about a foot beneath the surface by the side of our famine camp, and from this the disease was given to the camp. Many of the famine people took the disease, but owing to our timely administration of medicines comparatively few died. But I soon took the disease myself which nearly proved fatal, and left me in a very helpless condition. I was unable to walk for ten days and my nervous system was unstrung. After the crisis was over and I could be safely left, Mrs. Chute and Miss Graham went out into the compound and among the famine people, working day and night to save them. It attacked a number in the boarding school. Miss Graham would lay the heads of the children in her lap and administer medicine to them for hours at a time. I could not help feeling very anxious for both Mrs. Chute and Miss Graham, for cholera is one of the most infectious of diseases and almost sure death to our people. I much admired the disposition manifested by Miss Graham through it all. She did not try to escape the danger, but everywhere her help was needed she was there, night or day. It seemed to me miraculous that they have escaped the disease."

This is one of many such experiences that missionaries in famine districts have passed through, and quite a number have given their lives for the people. But my letter is getting too long and I close.

Yours in the work,

G. CHURCHILL.

P. S.—Four were baptized in Bobbili this month, and two have died.

G. C.

Taking a Census of All the Human Beings on the Globe.

The greatest undertaking of its kind in the history of the world was recently set on foot at the meeting of the International Statistical Institute in Berne. Concerning this work the New York Ledger says:

"It is proposed to take a census of all the inhabitants of the earth, and to publish the results at the opening of the twentieth century on January 1, 1901. The enormous difficulty of the work becomes apparent when one considers that at least two-thirds, and perhaps three-quarters of the inhabitants of our planet dwell in lands none of which have yet been fully civilized, and many of which still remain in a condition of savagery. Yet the purpose is, as far as possible, to include in the enumeration every human being on whom the sun rises on a particular day in the year 1900. Explorers and census-takers are to be sent to every attainable point on the globe for the purpose. Such is the scheme. It looks impracticable. An attempt has recently been made to take a complete census of Russia, and this will aid the new undertaking immensely. During his tour in Europe Li Hung Chang became interested in the proposed census of the world; and, it is asserted, promised his co-operation and assistance in the work. China forms the greatest factor of uncertainty in estimating the population of the globe. Estimates of the number of inhabitants in China vary sometimes by one or two hundred millions, and even the population of the chief cities can only be guessed at. So, too, Africa presents an enormous field of mysteries and difficulties. Estimates of its total population are constantly varying, because explorers frequently come upon knots and centres of population, the real extent of which is unknown. The most careful statisticians admit that their estimates of the population of Africa may be as much as fifty millions out of it. West of India are the vast lands that Alexander overran in his conquest—Afghanistan, Persia, and Turkey in Asia. How many scores of millions or even hundreds of millions may they not contain? Many of the uplands of Persia are practically unknown to the civilized world, but they can support a great population. No one knows how many people Arabia contains. Even the islands of the sea and the Polar regions have many human inhabitants. Nobody knows how many Eskimo there are dwelling in the lands of eternal ice that encircle the North Pole; many of the islands of the vast Pacific swarm with inhabitants living on the open bounty of nature, whose free and careless life has captivated the imagination of lightly cultivated men like Robert Louis Stevenson; and when the census is completed, if it proves practicable, what will it probably show the total population of the globe to be? For many years past the common estimate of the number of the world's inhabitants has been one billion five hundred millions—i. e. about thirty inhabitants to every square mile of land on the globe. If all of these inhabitants could be arranged in a row, standing shoulder touching shoulder, there are enough of them to completely encircle the earth at the equator, where it is about twenty-five thousand miles around, no less than twenty-two and three-quarter times! Twenty-two complete circles of human beings, shoulder to shoulder and three-quarters of another such circle, standing around the globe where its girth is greatest—that is the spectacle that would be presented."