

narrative of His earthly life. This was done at first by those who had known Him most intimately during the period of His ministry, who had followed His Passion, Death and Resurrection, and His Ascension at last into heaven. It was naturally done by word of mouth. But the time came when the founders of the Church were growing old. Their words would soon be heard no more. Or else they were leaving the communities which they had planted, to go to distant lands, from which, in all probability, they would never return. If human nature was then what it is now, it is certain they would sometimes be importuned to commit to writing that which they had been accustomed to deliver by oral teaching, or else some intimate associate would write down carefully the record of those who had seen the Lord. Common sense and ordinary prudence would dictate such a course, that the simple and straight forward narrative might not become distorted or amplified in the process of transmission.

This, then, is the origin of the Gospels. History clearly reveals this in the case of St. John, who wrote his Gospel shortly before his death. It was written at the request of the members of the church at Ephesus, where he spent the later years of his life, and it received the attestation of others, his contemporaries, who had also been eye-witnesses of Christ, and could guarantee the correctness of the narrative (see St. John xxi: 24, 25). But the necessity of some standard account of Christ must have forced itself upon the minds of some of the Apostles and founders many years before St. John's death. And so in similar or parallel ways the Gospels of St. Matthew, St. Mark and St. Luke, had come into existence. It makes no difference whether partial narratives, collection of discourses, and the like, were already in circulation or not. The opening words of St. Luke's Gospel, and some internal indications, make this altogether probable. But when the reverend men who were acknowledged on all sides as the founders and guides of the Church, engrafted any such previous accounts into their own words, they gave them an authority which they had not possessed before, such that they could be received as absolute truth.

That the course of things was almost certain to be such as we have described, is clear when we consider what Christianity was, how large and important a body of teaching it involved, and how essential to it was a knowledge of the life and words of its divine Author. And that this was the actual course of things is shown by every scrap of historical and literary evidence we possess.

Such, then, is the simplest statement of the origin of the New Testament. Collected, little by little, into one volume, it became a perpetual and cherished possession in the Church of the first age, and thus has been transmitted through the same authority to these latter days. But it is to be observed that the Church herself existed and was already wide spread. She had the Faith once delivered, and the organization and institutions which her founders had enjoined, long before a line of the Book was written. Thus the Church was in no sense founded upon the Bible, but simply upon the Apostles and Prophets, with Christ as the chief corner-stone.—*The Living Church.*

Peter speaks of the risen and exalted Christ as 'the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls; and in the Epistle to the Hebrews he is spoken of as 'that great Shepherd of the sheep.' (1 Pet. ii, 25, and Heb. xiii, 20). He spoke of Himself in the days of his flesh as 'the good Shepherd,' and as laying down His life for the sheep. Every man is infinitely interested in having his soul under the care of this divine Shepherd. He can take care of it as no other being can.

FAMILY DEPARTMENT.

THE OLD YEAR AND THE NEW.

I sat beside the hearth. The glowing embers cast their shadows weird on ceiling and on wall:

Outside the winter winds blew cold and dreary,
Against the pane I heard the rain drops fall.
As sadly there I sat, and mused, and pondered,
A sound of distant bells fell on my ear,
Ringing upon the midnight slowly, sadly,
A solemn requiem for the parting year.
A stealthy step upon my threshold roused me,
A hand undid the latch upon my door,
An old man stood before me, lowly bending
Beneath the weary burdens that he bore:
Then, starting up, I sorely wept, and pleaded
"O! give me back the gifts you bear away,—
The fondest hopes, most cherished aspirations
The friendships tried that light earth's darkest day."

The wind played with the old man's withered tresses,

The rain beat coldly through the open door,
He slowly shook his head, and pointing upward

Whispered "Above, where time shall be no more."

Then out amid the cold and rain he vanished,
And sadly turned I to my fireside drear.
As distant bells rang out their notes of gladness
To usher in the Happy, bright New Year,
Across my threshold passed a youthful stranger,
His golden locks upon his shoulders streamed,
His countenance was fresh with tints of morning,

While on his happy face a bright smile beamed.
Within his arms he held gifts bright and shining,

"I offer them," he softly murmured low,
"Fresh hopes, new friends await you in the future"

What the old year has taken I bestow."
"These, too, may perish," cried I, in my anguish

"Ah! friend I've lost, time never can restore."
The New Year answered fondly, sadly smiling,
"Bright memories remain forevermore."

—F. C. S.

Kirkton, Ont., January 1st, 1891.

THE ANGEL OF ST. LUKE'S.

A CHRISTMAS STORY.

BY DOROTHY DEAN.

'Shine, sir, shine!'

The voice rang out cheery and glad through the frosty morning air. Other voices were crying the same words, Sir Ralph had been hearing them all the morning, but this one, somehow, was different. It was clear, musical, its very tone was a suggestion of a song, a tender undertone lingered at its close, like the last fall of a fountain. Perhaps it was only his fancy that made him imagine so; anyway he stopped and looked down at the boy's face a slender face, with deep-set blue eyes, and a delicately-rounded chin. But Sir Ralph was in a hurry, so he only shook his head at the repeated question, and hurried on. All day that vibrant, musical voice followed him.

That night he sat by the fire with Dolly on his knee, listening as usual to the story of her day's little pleasures. Old Hero lay on the other side of the fire, curled contentedly on the rug, wagging his plummy tail now and then, and watching his master and his little mistress with bright affectionate eyes.

But Sir Ralph was very silent, and by and by, when Dolly had danced away to bed, he still sat there with the shadows heavy on his face. The wind had risen outside, the snow was whirling and drifting among the trees like writhing ghosts, and the wind rose in gusts,

wailing and moaning, till the man put both hands over his face and shivered. Old Hero got up presently, and went over to his master's knee and looked anxiously into his face. But Sir Ralph does not see him. Far away he looks, past the walls of home, past the city's bounds, to a little country graveyard. The snow is wreathing itself in garlands of heavenly purity about the marble cross that marks her place of rest. He catches the echo of her voice; her step sounds in the hall; her hand touches his. The flash of blue eyes is before him, and he stretches out his hand to clasp hers, but they close together empty, and he falls back in his chair with a groan, while the old tide of love and loss and longing sweeps over him. Hero whines softly, and looks at him with great liquid brown eyes. Then Sir Ralph lays his hand on the dog's shining head, and looks down into his eyes, limpid and almost human with their faithful love.

'Here,' he says, 'she is safe in God's keeping, and we would not call her back if we could.'

And the dog whines again and kisses his master's hand.

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The sun was shining in the old garden. Early flowers were abloom, the blue birds let fall notes of purest rapture, and down the meadows the larks chanted divinely. Sir Ralph bared his head in the soft air of the Sunday morning, feeling the tender beauty and the heavenly sweetness of it, this passage in the grand harmony of God's great anthem, which men call living. The winds blew over the bright spring grass, in soft undertone, whispering of the flowers that dwell in the far wood shadows, pale, sweet-faced flower-nuns in forest cloisters, and the air was sweet with the breath of their daily prayer. The sky bent over, tender and blue, like some great cup filled to the brim with clear shining.

Sir Ralph heard it all, the melodia, the diapason undertone, the vox celeste, viola and flute, the throbbing of vox humana through it all, and he bowed his head a moment as the melody swept over him, sweetened, softened, piano, pianissimo, into infinite whispered threads.

All at once a new voice came, clear and sweet through it all, a human voice, a boy's voice, so sweet, so clear, so full of spring's own gladness, that Sir Ralph could only stand and listen. Finally he saw him, standing under the trees, with his hands clasped before him, looking out and up into the bright spring sky. There was no words to the song, somehow there was no need for any words, you understood him without. All the spring sweetness was in his song, the blossoming flowers were in it, and the mating birds and sunbines.

He stopped singing when he saw Sir Ralph coming, and looked as if he were going to run away.

'Good morning,' said Sir Ralph, 'who taught you to sing?'

'My mother,' answered the boy.

'I should like to hear more of it, it is very good.'

Carl blushed, and did not answer a word, and the morning seemed to grow very hot and uncomfortable, with those keen gray eyes studying his face, a slender face, with deep-set eyes of blue, Sir Ralph had seen it before.

But by and by, I know not how it came about, for Carl was a very shy lad, he found himself telling this man all his story, about his mother with her pale shining face, and about the beautiful dream music that came to him. The tears shone in his eyes as he talked, and he told him of the music he longed for, of the hopes that came to him, with such soft, melodious voices, only to be drowned by the rattle and roar and sweep of the great city and the battle of life.

Sir Ralph listened and nodded encouragingly. Did he not know the paths and byways of the