

and a group of youthful men and women of American cast might be seen standing on the stone floor of the old pile, in low and broken conversation with subdued appearance of near solemnity, waiting for something. By them rested the aged and the younger widow. One or two seemed to move about arranging something with the sexton in the little sacristy—the vestry. Soon the group disappeared into that. The sexton evidently stood near the door listening to the unwonted service, for he picked up one of the melodies sung, greatly pleased with it. He was an old organist, and the hymn was our dear one, “Nearer, my God to Thee.” Within were gathered some sixteen. Presiding was the Rev. Mr. Bancroft, now Dr. and Principal of Phillips’ Academy, Andover. Our service was simple; we sang, read and prayed, and took the emblems, one handing them about. Save for the vaulted roof and the old high-backed chairs, it seemed like such a little scene at home. Our leader spoke to us of our use of that ordinance as a spiritual meal, as a time of remembrance, as a season of communing with one another and with our Master. His face lit up as he spoke, and the tones seemed other than his usual ones—seemed like tones spoken on familiar spots in the theological school where we both had studied. Some eyes were wet; doubtless all hearts were moved. The two old ladies seemed very happy, not a few words were spoken afterwards in thoughtfulness that we had come thus together; and outside good was done, not only by the collection of some couple of dollars given to the sexton for his poor. Other Christian hearts at home there heard, and their souls were touched by the beauty of the gathering, and drawn out even more than before in love for their Christian brethren from afar.

Again, six months slipped away. In a vacation, carrying the Gospel to Tyrol’s long-locked up valleys, to wild beautiful Tyrol, I had my heart stirred with a sense of the value of the Lord’s Supper to a Christian, as one aged true child of God said to me, “Oh, it is my earnest wish that once before I die, I might have the Holy Supper in the right way.” Roman Catholicism had tried to crush out in 1837, a little fruit of the Reformation that had flourished there for ages. But here was at least one of the Lord’s seed, seeing clearly the truth, cherishing his hidden Bible, and longing thus for that sacred rite, I had almost observed it with the good old man secretly alone. But now the American Board has a Mission in Innsbruck, and the wish may be soon fulfilled.

I came back. In the Halle University Hall, I heard two strangers speak English-like; spoke to them and we were soon friends, through the bond of common America. Among the talk of that first meeting, one said he wished we Americans might have a “Prayer meeting.” What a delight to hear the thought! Soon all were agreed. At the eager request of the widows, we learned to know above, the meeting was held in their little home, “for grannie’s sake.” We met Sabbath at half-past five till next August, leading in alphabetical order. I need say little about how many denominations were there. We long knew little of one another, save that we were devoted to one common Lord. We held the week of prayer, half hour an evening. Towards its close it was suggested, could we end it with a communion season on Sabbath? To this we agreed. Simple were the provisions. A tumbler held the wine; Professor H. Lewiston, Me., a Baptist, was the eldest among us, and presided. Three or four others took part, one minister a dear Methodist from Ohio, distributing the bread in his customary way, another Methodist, a young man from New York, already through his writing a power in America, gave the cup. He spoke a few earnest words to us asking us to pledge now truly unto Jesus devotion of our lives. A Congregationalist led in prayer. I think not a few felt powerfully the influence of the Spirit of God, making us sensible then, and for the time to come more really than before, of Him in whom we live and move. To feel this, and that His love is unspeakable, is precious—to grow in this is a great part of Christian life.

Let me tell of one more Communion Season. It was the first where I ever presided. I was not ordained, but the pastor, who was to be absent, desired me nevertheless to render the service. Was not that a sort of ordination? The sexton