

PASTOR HARMS AND HIS WORK.*

About two hours from Hanover, there is a wide range of country known as the Luneburger Heath, with a peculiar wild beauty of its own, and proverbial for the strong home-love of its peasantry. One of the villages, called Hermannsburg, may be taken for a picture of the rest. The cottages lie far apart, with their gardens between, little by-paths running from one to the other. Every house has the galloping horse of the old Saxons, or at least his head, perched upon the gable; within there is roominess and comfort, and that indefinable homeliness which is so rare out of Great Britain. There are no beggars, no rough or vagrant loungers about the streets, nor any ragged children.

Many years ago a new clergyman came to the parish, a Hermannsbürger himself, and the son of its former pastor. Bred upon the Heath, it seems to have exerted the same influence over him as over the rest, and his character has all the freedom, sturdiness, and power of self-reliance of the district, as well as other traits as marked. Before his father died, he came to assist him in his cure. It was only a year or two, when, in 1848, he was left alone. From this time he entered with all his heart on the singular labours which have occupied him incessantly ever since. He has become a power in the world by giving himself up to the power of God; for in proportion as Christ is in the believer, so is He the power of God in him.

He found the village and the neighbourhood very different from what they are now. Mr. Harms recognized that his first duty lay

within his own parish, and it was there he sought for Christian reform. But 1848 was a time of storm and confusion, when men's minds were disturbed, and when outward circumstances might be supposed to take the place of everything else. He did not delay for that. In prayer, in preaching, in visiting, in example, he laboured for this end; and the end he has reached is that Hermannsburg is now a Christian parish, the like of which is probably not to be found the world over. There is not a house in the village where there is not regular family worship morning and evening; there is no one absent from church unless by sickness. The population is small, and yet there are 11,000 communicants in the year; so that, with very rare exceptions, every adult must be a communicant, and every communicant be a frequent participator. The labourers have prayer in the fields; instead of country ballads, the ploughboy or the weeding-girl is singing one of the grand old hymns; the people are like one Christian family, and their influence and conversation have already acted on the surrounding districts. Their houses are neater, drunkenness is unknown; so is poverty. They are found to be kind-hearted, with few quarrels, good farmers, and good peasants.

While the people were rejoicing in their spiritual life, a mission to the heathen was suggested. It was a time of strong faith and self-sacrifice, and the suggestion was adopted. They would go out themselves as missionaries, wherever it might please God to show them the greatest need. This was in 1849. Twelve persons offered; a house was set apart for their re-

* Abridged from William Fleming Stevenson's "Praying and Working."