

AN APRIL DAY AT STEWART'S.

[One who in many charming poetical effusions has given pleasure in time past to the readers of THE GOSPEL MESSENGER, and more recently to those of THE CHURCH JOURNAL, has made a collection of her pieces, and had them printed for circulation among her friends only. Grateful to be recognized among the number of these, we take the liberty to select the following, which we find on the list of those not before published. — EDS. CHURCH JOURNAL.]

High o'er the counter, facing north,
Were windows ranged both wide and high,
Fast which the towering spire arose
Clear-cut against the azure sky:

Whose broad blue field was all unstained,
Save by the cloudlets gilding past—
Now single tufts of snowy down,
And now in fleecy clusters massed.

Below, upon the counter strewn,
Were frosty lace, rich and rare,
And over them a lady bent
With thoughtful, undecided air.

Those filmy clouds of wondrous web
Engrossed her down-directed eye;
She heeded not those other clouds
Floating above her o'er the sky.

Around her surged with ceaseless roar
Fair Fashion's ever-rolling tide,
Mid stores of costly fabrics piled
Through pillared arch and stairway wide.

The dust that rose beneath their tread
Dimmed all the splendor of that scene;
Without, how peaceful seemed the spire
Amid those depths of blue serene.

Long moments passed; the lady's eye,
Grown weary, glanced aside—then higher,
To where, in calm tranquillity,
Rose grandly up the Gothic spire.

At once she flung the fabric by—
"The spire points over up," she said,
"And these had well nigh dragged me down,
Those tangled webs of filmy thread."

"Why should I waste this April day
Amid these treasures of the loom,
When fairer far yon fleecy clouds,
Far richer April's bud and bloom?"

I will to where the lilies grow,
To ponder once again," she said,
"The needed lesson taught of old,
But still, alas! too oft unread."

GROWTH OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

To the Editor of The Tribune.

SIR: Some time ago I was requested to address a meeting of clergymen. I addressed them accordingly. The subject of my address was the obstacles to Church growth. A report of the address was published in one of the newspapers, much perverted and full of errors, and displayed with head lines, so as to give a meaning the reverse, in some things, of what was intended, and a sensational effect which was utterly foreign to the address and to my purpose. My esteemed friend, Dr. Ewer, will appreciate the situation when I decline utterly any responsibility for that report. At the same time I am quite willing to shoulder the responsibility of the statement which he disputes in a recent letter in *The Tribune*.

Whatever be the causes, whether I am right or wrong in my opinion about them, the fact is the Church has not grown since 1860 as it grew from 1850 to 1860. Now I quite agree with my brother that in one view this is of no account. Truth does not depend on count of heads. Like myself, Dr. Ewer believes the Church of which we are presbyters, to be God's Church in this land, whether it grows as fast as we would like or not; and believing it to be a Divine Institution, and not a human, I do not understand the sensitiveness displayed by some when its growth is discussed. There are some who seem to me anxious to show that our Church is always growing faster than other bodies, as if that fact were the great proof of her truth, and who resent any denial of such a statement as if it were injurious to the Church, or high treason to her claims. For myself, believing the Church to be divine and guided by her Lord, I see no necessity for boasting about her growth as if one were "bulling a stock" in Wall street! and no harm, but great good, in knowing the facts as they are. That the Church is growing, there is no question. That she is not growing as those who love her, like Dr. Ewer and myself, would have her, there is no question either. I am satisfied she never can grow fast enough to suit either of us—of course, I mean, in right growth. At the same time there is a growth not counted by numbers, which we both recognize as the best. But when I spoke of growth, I meant the common vulgar growth which figures measure.

Dr. Ewer gives conclusions, reached from examinations and collations of almanacs and year books, and counts by communicants. Whoever has had much experience in statistics, knows that a count on that basis is most uncertain. Lists of communicants are very rarely accurately kept, though much more so now than formerly. My opinion, as I expressed it, was founded on the returns of the United States Census by churches and sittings. There is no table of membership for any religious body given. According to the census, from 1850 to 1860, our increase was 686 churches and 203,698 sittings—the difference between 1,459 churches in 1850 and 2,145 in 1860, and an increase in churches of about 46 per cent., and in sittings of about 30 per cent. From 1860 to 1870 we increased from 2,145 churches to 2,601—456, and from 847,296 sittings to 991,051—143,755, about 22 per cent. of churches, and a little over 16 per cent. of sittings. Here, by the census, the rate of growth from 1850 to 1860 is twice that from 1860 to 1870. Whether this growth keeps up relatively with an increase of population, is of little consequence, though clearly it falls much below. The point is, it is about half the rate of the ten years previous. The figures here are from the census returns, and deal with matters official and tangible. There is certainly no way to reach the actual growth so surely and satisfactorily as to count the churches built and the sittings supplied. Why this conclusion should differ so widely from Dr. Ewer's, I cannot tell. Statistics are very ticklish things, and need careful handling. I am more disposed to trust the trained statisticians of the Census Bureau than any collation made

by myself of such very carelessly ordered things as our diocesan reports sometimes are. Nevertheless, for one moment, I will refer to the latest figures in Mr. Whitaker's almanacs. In 1873, clergy, 3,055; in 1874, 3,081; increase, 26. In 1873, baptisms, 38,832; in 1874, 41,816; increase, 3,014. Confirmations, increase from 1873 to 1874, 991; in increase in same time of communicants, 18,556. (These last figures show the untrustworthiness of such statistics. It is impossible, with an increase of only 991 confirmed, that over 18,000 should have been added to the communion. Any Churchman can see that there is a discrepancy.) Increase in ordinations, 17; decrease in candidates for orders, 33.

We are safe in taking the lists of clergy and candidates, and the tables of the confirmed, from the almanacs, for the Bishops have charge of them. But the lists of communicants have discrepancies always, which make them useless. The number of churches, the number of clergy, the number of persons confirmed, the number of candidates for orders, are the true basis for an examination of growth. The reported number of communicants is always guess-work; sometimes, I think, over the reality; and in old days, far under it, for very well known reasons. I do not much believe in "numbering the people of the Lord" in any case. From David's time till now the undertaking has never been a success.

Let me say, in conclusion, I do not care enough about this to argue it. But I do not believe it will do Churchmen any harm to call their attention to the second volume of the census for 1870. Whether the Church grows as fast in one decade as in another, is not, after all, of the first consequence. The long days of time are hers. She is not the daughter of this day, but of the ages. "The number of the names together" was once only "an hundred and twenty," and yet they conquered the Roman Empire in three centuries! I believe, and I am sure my friend and brother believes with me, that whosoever the Church shall arise to the grandeur of her duty and her calling as the Divine Spouse of Christ, early faith will give again early victories. At the same time I doubt not we equally agree that for men and churches the wise way is to face the facts and take a good look around and ahead.

HUGH MILLER THOMPSON.

New York, Feb. 13th, 1875.

Parish and Family Reading.

For the Church Journal and Messenger.

EVERY FRIDAY.

Could you have known sweet Elizabeth Gray, I am sure you would have admired and loved her, as all her friends did, and perhaps you would have been influenced by her example, as many were.

"What was there so charming about Elizabeth Gray?" you may ask, as many very often did, who were conscious of something, they could not tell what, that gave a peculiar grace to all she said and did, as well as making even her presence a delight.

If you should ask the old women at a certain Church Home, why they enjoyed Elizabeth's visits and kind offices more than those of the other ladies who visited them, they would no doubt reply "O! she is so different from every one, somehow." The children she taught in Sunday-school, and the poor families she relieved, also realized that a blessing was connected with her labors for them, that never came with the services of any one else. And such was the effect of her manner even upon those who met her for the first time, that little children playing on the sidewalk would whisper to each other "Aint she pretty?" or "Aint she nice?" when she had stopped to talk with them, or to pick them up, as they fell down in running, or drawing each other on their sleds. While the babies in the street cars—whose warm soft hands Elizabeth held, her love for children prompting even a momentary acquaintance—even these little strangers looked fearlessly into her great dark eyes and smiled, trying to go to her.

This was long ago! The old women at the Church Home who took such pleasure in Elizabeth's visits have long since gone to Paradise, as we humbly trust; the poor families she assisted have moved away from the places Elizabeth visited; the Sunday-school children that she taught, the little boys and girls that she helped in the street, and the babies in the cars who tried to go to her, all have grown up to be men and women. And Elizabeth herself—where is she? Can we speak of death in connection with one who still lives in the hearts of all who knew her? When, although her personal presence has been withdrawn from her friends, the lasting influence of her words and example is still felt? When the pictures she selected; the plants that she tended; the books her pencil had marked; and the piano from which she had brought out all the soul-thrilling power and pathos hidden in Beethoven's and Mendelssohn's music;—when all these inanimate objects owned and treasured by her, recalled the sweet remembrance of the dear friend who was "not lost but only gone before," and still bound to them by indissoluble ties; can we call her dead? How could she have acquired such an influence? Was it mere physical magnetism, do you think? What could have induced her to visit so regularly the Church Home with its querulous, exacting inmates, or the squalid and cheerless homes of the poor, when more congenial friends were always eager to have her with them? What could have interested her in making plain coarse garments for the poor, when embroidery, books, flowers, and music could have absorbed all her time? Did she become such a lovely symmetrical character unassisted? Were all these duties suggested by a duty-loving nature?

No indeed! No one could become such a character without the grace of God, given as a return for earnest prayer and constant endeavor. I could tell you of Elizabeth's condition before she began her voluntarily consecrated life. I could tell you of the impetuous nature; the impatience with her surroundings, that were at one time in direct contrast to her tastes and desires. I could tell you of the fierce struggles she endured with "the world, the flesh, and the devil," before her spirit was controlled and under subjection. But it is enough for you to know that at one time Elizabeth was so utterly discouraged in the conflict she had undertaken, she even thought it a mockery to pray for guidance, and almost yielded to the temptation to give up all effort. Perhaps at this crisis the petitions in the Litany "for comfort and help for the weak-hearted," and for deliverance "from the crafts and assaults of the devil," may have been offered in righteous faith by some friend who knew her spiritual condition. Perhaps the prayers of the whole Church for "all those who are in trouble, sickness, need, sorrow, or any other adversity," may have been answered for her.

It was at this crisis that Elizabeth, whose beautiful Hebrew name means *consecrated to God*, was advised to devote her characteristic energy to external works, as an accompaniment to the faith which had been professed in her name in Holy Baptism, and which she had acknowledged at her confirmation, but which had never been joined with the fruits of the Spirit. She was led to realize more fully than ever before the mysterious influence of one's daily life upon the character. Wishing to become an intelligent Churchwoman, she began to examine into "the precious soul of our mother's ancient faith, as embodied in the creeds and liturgies, and especially in the Sacramental Offices." Her vigorous mind, that had been assaulted by many a temptation to give up her faith, and by free (whatever this term may comprehend), had taken delight in examining all the proofs of the Christian religion; and her heart, warm with an eager desire to be a consistent Christian, kept pace with the labors of her intellect. When she found where the Bible and Sacraments had been so carefully preserved, she thanked God most heartily for His goodness, in perpetuating a "Holy Catholic Church" through so many ages. Not the least interesting or important of her researches was the one to find grounds for the claim of Divine institution which the Ministry presented. "Without such institution what authority had any man to administer the Sacraments?" Elizabeth asked.

An examination of the meaning of the Minor Festivals, was also of great use and pleasure at this time, and Elizabeth delighted to do honor, with all her "heart, and soul, and mind, and strength," on those days to the Lord, who had brought out so much virtue through the sufferings of His saints. But aside from the Holy Sacraments and Saints' Days, there was one means of grace that Elizabeth found of great benefit to her, and that was *every Friday*, which she called "the still small voice." This day, considered unimportant by so many, was to Elizabeth the most satisfactory of all work days, and on it her labors were performed with enthusiasm, zeal and patience. Some one said to her once: "What difference does it make whether you eat meat or fish on Friday? or whether you sew for the poor on that day or some other?" Another person said: "I should think it was enough to observe Lent religiously, without giving up so many pleasures every Friday, and devoting yourself to miserable old women and sick babies."

Whatever remark or question was offered, the same gentle patience was manifest in the reply. To one Elizabeth said: "There are very few who do not acknowledge the propriety, if not the necessity of observing every Sunday in honor of our Lord's resurrection. Why should we not observe every Friday in honor of His crucifixion?" We are too apt to forget or neglect the commemoration of this event, except once a year, when the Good Friday services are used.

As a preparation for Good Friday and the penitential season preceding it, I have found every Friday of great use, and would recommend its observance to those devoutly disposed persons, who say that the abstinence and frequent services of Lent made it a great contrast to the rest of the year. I can remember a time when the effect of Holy Week, with its oft repeated story of our Saviour's sufferings, was so depressing as to be overwhelming. And after it was over, I fear that there was no permanent influence upon me until "the still small voice" spoke to me every week, begging me to consider its claim upon my attention; a claim that I found was presented by our beloved Mother the Church, in her table of Fasts, on which "such a measure of abstinence is required as is more especially suited to extraordinary acts and exercises of devotion." To the person who asked why she should not eat meat as well as fish, Elizabeth replied: "Those who are fond of meat and depend upon it for strength and sustenance, would feel the lack of it, more than anything else. While they deny themselves this seemingly necessary article of food, they can realize