THE STORY OF THE "NINETY AND NINE"

The best expression of divine affection for all men and a complete description of the parent's love for the child is found in the hymn familiar the world over and known as "The Ninety and Nine."

A writer who declared, "We never know the love of the parent till we become parents ourselves," explained: "When we first bend over the cradle of our own child God throws back the temple door and reveals to us the sacredness and mystery of the father's and the mother's love to ourselves. And in later years, when they have gone from us, there is always a certain sorrow that we can not tell them we have found it out."

Will any parent who has learned "How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child," object to an humble effort to "throw back the temple door?" Will any child, who, verging upon manhood or womanhood, has failed to approciate the parent's love, refuse to observe the moral of this tale?

Listen to the story of "The Ninety and Nine."

That story is not entirely the product of human minds. It is founded on the declaration of the Nararene: "How, think ye? If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine and goeth into the mountains and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so, it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish."

Moody and Sankey, famous evangelists, were riding en route to Edinburgh, when Mr. Sankey, happening to pick up a newspaper, read in an obscure corner of the publication a little poem entitled: "The Ninety and Nine." The poem was as follows:

There were ninety and nine that safely lay
  In the shelter of the fold,
But one was out on the hills away,
  Far off from the gates of gold—
Away on the mountains wild and bare,
Away from the tender Shepherd's care.

"Lord, Thou hast here Thy ninety and nine;
  Are they not enough for Thee?"
But the Shepherd made answer,
  "This of Mine has wandered away from me,
And although the road be rough and steep,
I go to the desert to find my sheep."

But none of the ransomed ever knew
  How deep were the waters crossed;
Nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed thro',
  Ere he found His sheep that was lost;
Out in the desert He heard it's cry—
Sick and helpless and ready to die.

"Lord, whence are those blood-drops all the way,
  That mark out the mountain's track?"
"They were shed for one who had gone astray,
  Ere the Shepherd could bring him back;"
"Lord, whence are Thy hands so rent and torn?"
"They are pierced tonight by many a thorn."

But all through the mountains, thunder-riven,
  And up from the rocky steep,
There arose a glad cry to the gate of heaven,
  "Rejoice! I have found my sheep!"
And the angels echoed around the throne,
"Rejoice! For the Lord brings back His own!"

The editor seemed not to have been greatly impressed with the beauties of the poem that has since become famous; but Mr. Sankey recognized its merits at a glance, and turning to Mr. Moody he declared: "I have found my hymn!"

That night, in the presence of 15,000 men, women and children, gathered at the great revival meeting, Mr. Sankey announced that he was about to sing a new song, and that he was, at the moment, ignorant of its notes. He said he was so impressed with the language that he would depend upon some inspiration to find the music. Seating himself at the organ he sang that splendid hymn to the air now familiar to millions of men all over the world. It is interesting, if not significant, that when, for the first time, Mr. Sankey sang this song, he did not know, nor did the world know, the name of the author of the verse. It was first printed as a poem and without the author's name attached, and it was only in later years that it became known that the beautiful words were written by Elizabeth C. Clephane. Mr. Sankey repeatedly and publicly said that until he took his seat at the organ in the Edinburgh meeting he had no idea of the notes which he would apply to the words.

As Elizabeth Clephane, converting the Savior's words into beautiful verse, touched the hearts of the moderns, who sometimes understand in poetry what they fail to grasp in parable; as Sankey, setting to music those inspiring words, made men to know that of which they had been ignorant; so some one whose identity is yet unknown, but who is deserving of high fame, reduced the Clephane poem and the Sankey song into the negro vernacular, giving to the world the story of "the ninety and nine" in its sweetest version.

The London Express says that Mrs. Charles M. Alexander, wife of the famous gospel singer of the Torrey-Alexander mission, recited the "Darkey's version" of "The Ninety and Nine," to 10,000 people at Albert hall, London, on the evening of March 22. The Express adds: "The poem describes in negro vernacular the story of the search of the Good Shepherd for the one sheep of his flock." The poem follows:

Por lil brack sheep, don strayed away,
  Don los in de win an' de rain;
And de Shepherd, He say, "O hirelin,
  Go find my sheep again."
But de hirelin frown—"O Shepherd,
  Dat sheep am brack an' bad."
But de Shepherd, He smile like de lil brack sheep
  Wuz the onliest lamb he had.

An' He say, "O hirelin, hasten,
  For de win and de rain am col;
An' dat lil brack sheep am lonesom,
  Out dar so far from de fol."
De hirelin frown, "O Shepherd,
  Dat sheep am ol and gray,"
But de Shepherd, He smile like de lil brack sheep
  Wuz fair as de break ob day!

An' He say, "O hirelin, hasten,
  Lo, here am de ninety-an'-nine,
But dar, way off from the sheep-fol,
  Is dat lil brack sheep ob Mine."
An' de hirelin frown, "O Shepherd,
  De res ob de sheep am here,"
But de Shepherd, He smile like de lil brack sheep
  He hol it de mostest dear.

An' de Shepherd go out in de darkness,
  Where de night was col and bleak;
An' dat lil brack sheep, He find it,
  An' lay it agains His cheek.
An' de hirelin frown, "O Shepherd,
  Don' bring dat sheep to me."
But de Shepherd, He smile, an' He hol it close,
  An'—dat lil brack sheep—wuz—me!

Several years ago a desperate man rushed into the office of Russell Sage, the great financier, and exploded a bomb. Mr. Sage escaped injury, but his assailant was blown to pieces. While police officers, surgeons and newspaper men were gathered about the place, a woman with a shawl over her head rushed into the office and, kneeling in a corner of the room, drew aside a piece of sheeting and pressed to her bosom the dissevered head of the bomb-thrower. No one present knew the woman, but everyone instinctively knew that she was the mother of Russell Sage's assailant. And that is "the story of the ninety and nine!"

Nan Patterson, charged with the awful crime of murder, disowned by her friends and disgraced before the world, stood in New York's criminal court, helpless and alone—yet not alone, because her faithful father went to her support. Nan Patterson found there that the same father whose wise counsels she had ignored in her youth, was, even in spite of her indifferences, anxious to give comfort in her necessity. That is "the story of the ninety and nine!"

General Molineaux, one of the gallant officers of our civil war, was brought to grief by the escapades of a son. But General Molineaux, true parent that he was, forgot the wickedness of the man charged with crime in the love he had for his boy. All the world knows of the devotion which this fine soldier and good citizen displayed during the agonizing hours of his son's trial. That is "the story of the ninety and nine!"

The father—proud of the honored position he has won in the world, through correct living, and jealous of his household's name—rushing to the police court to rescue a boy guilty of crime; the mother, braving the frowns of society in order to save, not from shame—for it is too late for that—but from utter destruction, the daughter whom she loves better than life itself; the parents everywhere, spending sleepless nights and careworn days, troubled over the future of their child; the anxiety for the whereabouts of the boy or the girl when the shadows of night have fallen; the incurrence of debts by fathers and the sacrifices of comforts by mothers in order that a loved one may take its coveted position in the world; the prayers, the tears, the sobs given by God-loving parents in behalf of heedless offspring; the hopes, the sighs, the aspirations, the love—all too often scattered like sweetness on the desert air—by devoted parent for wayward child—All these are but representative of "the story of the ninety and nine!"

In the presence of all this love, of all these tears and sighs and sacrifices, is it any wonder that there involuntarily arises the prayer—or if you chose to call it the wish: Would that the children could appreciate the love of the parents before it is too late! Would that the children could understand "the story of the ninety and nine;" but none of the ransomed ever know how deep are the waters crossed, nor how dark is the night that the Shepherd goes through, ere He finds His sheep that was lost!

RICHARD L. METCALFE.

IT IS OBLIGATORY ON EVERY TRUE DEMOCRAT TO VOTE AT THE PRIMARIES OF HIS PARTY

One of the most interesting letters received by The Commoner was written by Dr. S. M. Carton, of Thornton, Texas. Dr. Carton is seventy-four years of age. He says: "I have never failed to vote the democratic ticket. I voted for Greeley and for Parker, two political sins, but they were my party's candidates. Moral manhood makes it obligatory upon every true blue democrat to vote at the primaries. If every voter could have the moral courage to do right, because it is right to do right, without any restraints being thrown around him, and to refuse to do wrong, because it is wrong to do wrong, regardless of temptation or influence, a grand democratic victory would be won in 1908."

Merritt Moore of Northfield, Minn., sends in primary pledge with forty-one names attached. Mr. Moore says: "This work seems to be popular with the people."

Jack Quayle, lawyer, of Moberly, Mo., sends in primary pledge with 148 signatures. Mr. Quayle says that he obtained these names in a very short time and suggests that every other democrat do likewise.

Extracts from other letters, all enclosing pledges, follow:

W. M. Carter, Lakeview, Iowa.—I will follow where Mr. Bryan leads.

W. C. Roberts, Albion.—I heartily endorse your plan.

M. S. Blassingame, principal public schools, Sentinel, Okla.—I am watching with pleasure the thousands of democrats of all sections of our beloved country rallying and signing the pledge, which appears in your paper. No ill can come of this; it is the imperative duty of every citizen to attend and participate in the conventions and primaries of his own party and the general elections. With the privilege of voting comes a corresponding responsibility.

John A. Walton, Lima, Ohio.—Enclosed find primary pledge signed by twenty.

R. L. Morgan, lawyer, Bloomington, Ind.—Mr. Bryan deserves a great deal of credit for advancing this idea to the readers of The Commoner, and I believe that those who sign these pledges will feel under obligation to him as well as to the party. I hope this plan of organization will prove successful.

O. J. Glenn, Macon, Mo.—Please find my pri-

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