

Friederike Fliedner.

4. THE CROSS-BEARER, OR EARTHLY SORROW AND HEAVENLY JOY.

(Translated from the German* by Miss L. METTA
SAUNDERS.)

(Concluded from page 517.)

"I wish I could have given my dear children a description of the majestic mountains, but I must hasten, I have much to do and little rest for writing. May the Lord bless and keep you and the dear faithful Sisters without whom I could not have carried all this through, for which the Lord strengthens me. O my beloved Hanna! (the youngest of the sick children) how I should . . . I am not to do it, I must give it up. May the Lord give a willing heart. Ever your Friederike."

On October 30th had the mother's heart sent forth this sigh to her sick children. Meanwhile, a dangerous relapse had set in, and on November 1st the Good Shepherd had fetched home the eldest of them, the nine-year-old Simonette, into His Kingdom, for which she was prematurely ripe.

Fliedner travelled to meet his wife, as in those days of no railways and no telegraphs, the news by post would have reached her too late, and returned with her on the day of the funeral. With silent resignation she had received the sad news, composedly she stepped up to Hanna's little bed, and after one look at the white features, drawn with pain, she said with conviction: "She is also going home." Then she led the eldest just recovered daughter into the autumn garden, and walking about between the rose trees, all bare of their leaves, compared their fading and blooming again with our own departure and resurrection in so beautiful a manner, testifying to the glory that awaits us with such joyful assurance, that her daughter remembers this walk after half a century.

When a few days afterwards her conviction came true, and the Lord released her Hanna also from all her pain, she gave up this child also willingly, if with a breaking heart. Too exhausted to accompany the coffin, she could only watch the departure of the beloved corpse in silence from the window with the feeling that she would soon follow her beloved ones. "I have home-sickness," she would often reply to the anxious enquiries of her relatives in those days. At Xmas she wrote to her parents: "I am quiet although I weep much, I willingly grant all happiness to my children, I know

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them to be in the arms of their Saviour, I hope to end the year 1841 in the will of God, which alone is just and good. The Lord will not try us above what we are able."

Meanwhile it was not her way to be absorbed in grief and only to think of herself.

The loss of the beloved children and the appearance of the empty beds brought into being a plan which she had long thought of and spoken about to her husband. They felt that it was not enough to care for sick and fallen persons. Christian love must also embrace the neglected orphans, and in their education the Deaconesses' work was to compass a new field of blessed activity.

In many larger towns, orphans were cared for in old institutions. But in this country and in the smaller towns there were no such institutions, and orphans in the middle classes, of teachers and clergy, found, if they had no relations, seldom any proper education.

Curiously enough when the plan was first made known, no applications for admission came from a distance; like the children's school this work was also destined to grow up from Fliedner's own parish in Kaiserswerth.

The evangelical Frau Kohn died on April 2nd, and destitution threatened the two little girls she left behind. The day following, the Pastor's wife led the orphans to her own children, with the words: "God has given you two new little sisters." The pleasure exhibited was moderate. Quite disappointed, the seven year old younger daughter said: "They are not come from heaven; they are only the Kohns." For she knew them only too well as schoolfellows with whom she was not particularly friendly. When the mother went on to suggest that she should give the doll and doll's bed, with which she was just playing, to the weeping adopted sister, there came an indignant refusal. Only when her mother with gentle correction said: "These children have no longer any mother, and you do not know how long you may have yours" was she ready to give up her treasure, although not without tears.

The same daughter 50 years later told the story at the Jubilee of the Institution.

It was the last work of love which the pastor's wife, in the life that was short and yet so rich, was able to found. The prayer of her youth was fulfilled: "Lord, grant that I may be always ready for Thee, that I may be prepared to offer up everything to Thee if Thou dost wish it. Grant that I may be grateful to Thee for everything, but specially for the inward suffering through which Thou wilt humble Thy feeble servant. Yea, Lord, so is it well pleasing to Thee. Thy will be done. Amen."

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)