

CHRISTIAN HERALD

AND SIGNS OF OUR TIMES

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Rev. T. De Witt Talmage, D.D., Editor.

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Back from Scenes of Suffering

Dr. Klopsch Tells His Experiences in Cuba—President McKinley and His Advisers Deeply Interested in the Relief Work Among the Reconcentrados—The Present Condition of the Work and its Immediate Needs.

ON his return from Cuba, whither he went to personally supervise the relief work among the starving reconcentrados and to arrange for its extension, Dr. Louis Klopsch, the proprietor of THE CHRISTIAN HERALD, has

Assistant Secretary of State, briefly the condition of the American relief work on that unhappy island. After listening to me a few minutes, Mr. Adee suggested that I see Judge Day, First Assistant Secretary of State, which I did. Judge Day heard

of Cuba should be closed against us, the Spanish military would, of course, appropriate the stores on hand, and the reconcentrados must inevitably perish, as even at the present time, with ports open, they were no further than eight or ten days re-

gentlemen I repeated what I had already said to Judge Day, and replied to various inquiries bearing on the situation in Cuba, but giving no expression to any political views which I personally may have entertained, but simply reflecting the



OUR RELIEF WORK IN CUBA—DISTRIBUTING SUPPLIES TO THE RECONCENTRADOS AT JESUS DEL MONTE, HAVANA. (See page 322)

prepared the following report of his tour, which will be read with deep interest by all who have had a part in this life-saving mission:

"After a month's absence in Cuba, on returning home, I visited Washington, and reported to Hon. Mr. Adee, Second

me with close attention and manifested great interest in the work. In the course of the interview, he asked:

"Dr. Klopsch, how would these reconcentrados be affected in case war should be declared?"

"I then told him that in case the ports

moved from death by sheer starvation.

"Judge Day, at the conclusion of our talk, asked me to return in half an hour, when I was summoned to the White House and introduced to the President, Members of the Cabinet, and several Senators of the United States. To these

opinions of prominent Cubans in Havana whom I had met there.

"All the gentlemen present seemed particularly interested in the present status of the relief work, and in the quantities of supplies now in the store-houses, and also

(Continued on page 322.)

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Title: A Pastoral Call, And How It Brought Happiness to a Disunited Family

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A PASTORAL CALL,

And How It Brought Happiness to a
Disunited Family.



Written by...
L. M. MONTGOMERY.

A Pastoral Call,

And How It Brought Happiness to a Disunited Family

L. M. Montgomery

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1898; Part II: April 20, 1898.



rs. Kennedy turned from the window where she had been smilelessly watching the golden-red glow of sunset flush with transitory softness and splendor the harsh, bare outlines of the late autumn landscape. She was a spare little woman with a slight stoop, and a quick, nervous step. Her gray hair was drawn tightly back from her lined forehead and twisted into a hard little knot behind.

Her eyes were keen and shrewd, her thin, long lips were tightly, even obstinately set. Her face was sallow and wrinkled. She looked much older than she was.

“There’s some one coming up the lane, Miranda,” she said. “I think it’s the new minister. If it is go and open the parlor blinds and show him in there. I don’t want to see him a mite,” she muttered vindictively, after Miranda had shuffled out into the hall. “I know what he’s coming for—just to rake those old bones over again, I haven’t a doubt. I’m sick and tired of it. The last minister soon found out I wasn’t going to put up with his interference. He learned to hold his tongue about in the end, I guess. Now it’ll have to be all done over again. I wish folks would mind their own affairs. What business has a man, just because he is a minister, to go poking and prying into what doesn’t concern him! I’ll let that young man know it, too, if he says much. He’ll think it his duty to rebuke me if he’s heard of me—and of course he has. Gossip and scandal is all that crowd down at Pawtucket live on.”

She passed her hands over her hair and straightened her starched, white apron. Then she listened attentively.

“Yes, it is him. I’d kind of hoped it wasn’t. Well, he’d better mind what he says to me.”

She shut her lips in a way that boded no good to the young man who was at that moment sitting by the parlor window, where the warm rays of the sunset fell over his boyish face, pale and thin, as if from long study. His eyes were large and dark, with a singularly earnest and spiritual look; his mouth was mobile and sensitive. He looked very young—younger than he really was, and he was only a little over twenty-one. Mrs. Kennedy coming in, defiant and rigid, felt a sort of protesting anger that this beardless boy should have any right to criticise or disapprove of her actions. She shook hands coldly with him and sat down by the other window, where the harsh, grey light on her face brought out all its hard, uncompromising lines.

The young man felt vaguely that she brought with her a spirit of hostility. She sat upright, the angularity and stiffness of her whole appearance in keeping with the arrangement of the little, square room.

The chairs were set in a prim row along the walls; the mats were laid precisely; some faded photographs in old-fashioned frames adorned the walls, and over the

mantel hung a cheap chromo of the prodigal son. The windows were draped with straight, stiffly-starched, white muslin curtains, so crisp and crackly that one expected them to snap off at a touch.

He wondered what he should say to her but she spoke first.

"You're the new minister over at Pawtucket, I suppose," she said stiffly. "I'm pleased to see you. Perhaps you find it cold in here. These fall days are real chilly."

"I'm not at all cold, thank you, Mrs. Kennedy. I know it is a rather late hour for a call, but I wished to visit all the families along this road to-day, and this is the last house. You are quite a distance from any neighbor."

He smiled at her as he spoke—a rare, sudden smile that irradiated all his pale, scholarly face with a warm magnetic glow. The Rev. Cecil Douglas was still too young to have learned how much that sweet, sympathetic smile did for him. Perhaps when he learned its value its charm would be less potent. People thawed out, unconsciously, under it. Children smiled back to it with the perfect unreasoning confidence of childhood. Hard-working, unsentimental men and women felt their hearts warm to their boyish pastor when he looked into their eyes with that clear smile. Even Mrs. Kennedy felt its influence.

"I do live considerably out of the world, I s'pose," she said less rigidly. "Not that I mind—it keeps me from getting into rows and quarrels with other folks. Pawtucket people ain't angels—I s'pose you've discovered that. I don't set up to be better than others, but I keep to myself. You look kind of young to be a minister."

The young man flushed sensitively. "I look younger than I am," he said, "but I am young—very young and very inexperienced. I often wonder how I dare undertake the responsibilities of such a position as mine. My heart is in my chosen work—I desire to be not unworthy of my high calling. I need all the patience and prayerful sympathy of my people. A minister can do a great deal sometimes, but the means of his usefulness is limited by the spirit of those whom he is appointed to teach and be taught by. I have a great deal to learn—I am willing to begin at the very beginning—I hope—I am sure—that you will all help me in my work."

Mrs. Kennedy was quite silent. She had not expected this, and had no answers ready. The last minister had been in Pawtucket for fifteen years. He was an old man and a good man, but he was very different from this. He had grown a little too dogmatic and severe in his long experience with the contrary-minded in Pawtucket. The Pawtucket people were not easy to get along with. In his own mind he had considered Mrs. Kennedy to be a hard, worldly minded woman. She had felt and resented this. Pawtucket folks heard with relish of certain verbal conflicts between Mrs. Kennedy and the Rev. Dayton—conflicts in which Mrs. Kennedy had held her

own with such spirit and energy that the poor pastor was fain to resign her to the dominion of her own evil nature. Mrs. Kennedy herself had grown to have a chronic spite against any and all ministers. She had been thinking with a certain relish, as she sat there, what she would say to her caller if he should try to unlock the door of her skeleton closet. She felt disconcerted that he had taken so different a course.

The young minister looked compassionately at the pinched, discontented face opposite him. He felt instinctively that this woman required help if he were able to give it, or if she would take it when offered.

“You live all alone?” he said.

“Yes, you may say so. A servant-girl ain’t much company. I’m as good as alone.”

“So is my mother now,” said the young man softly, “all alone—and I am so far away from her. She misses me, I know, and I miss her more than words can say. She is such a dear, good mother—the best ever a boy had, I think. I suppose every boy thinks that of his mother, though. You have no sons, Mrs. Kennedy?”

Mrs. Kennedy stiffened herself up and looked at him with angry suspicion. She had an odd resemblance to a watchful irritated cat, ready to pounce at any movement. But she saw nothing save kindly interest in the minister’s open face.

“Yes, I have *one* son,” she said deliberately, “or I *had*, I don’t consider him as a son now after the way he has behaved. It’s a wonder you haven’t heard. His name is Walter Kennedy. He lives in that little shanty away down at the corners. You can see the end of it beyond that bush.”

She pointed defiantly out of the window behind him. Her eyes were angry and her breath came faster.

“I was there this afternoon,” said Mr. Douglas, slowly. He felt surprised and was not sure of his ground. “I did not know you were his mother. He has a very sweet wife and child.”

“That ain’t nothing to me,” retorted Mrs. Kennedy acridly. “I ought to know how sweet she is, I guess. You needn’t talk—I’ve had enough lecturing on that subject already. I don’t want ever to have anything to do with them again. I know what it is to have an ungrateful child. Walter Kennedy and his wife can go their own way for all of me. I don’t want to hear nothing about them. I haven’t no dealings with them and don’t want to have.”

She paused with a cowering exultation over her boldness in speaking so to the minister. She expected a severe, shocked rebuke, but none came.

“I am sorry,” he said simply. “Perhaps things will be better some day.”

“You don’t know much about the Kennedys if you think that. We mean a thing

when we say it. I didn't drive Walter away. He went of his own accord, so I guess I won't ask him to come back again in a hurry."

She stopped abruptly, and looked at him suspiciously, "It's queer you haven't heard about it before this. Ain't that what you came here for—just to lecture me about that affair?"

"Mrs. Kennedy, I did not even know you had a son. You need not tell me anything about it if you do not wish to!"

"Ah! I dunno if I care. I ain't ashamed of my part. Somebody else'll tell you if I don't, and they'll put more to it. Some of the Pawtucket folks have great imaginations. Walter's father died when he was a baby—he was our only child. I brought him up, and I did as well as I could for him. I was a good mother to Walter if I do say it. I worked hard and saved for him. I won't say he wasn't a good son, too—he was; I wouldn't ask for a better. I never heard a cross word from him.

"Then he got married—he married Esther Willis. I was dead against it from the first, but Walter wouldn't listen to me. I hadn't nothing against Esther, but she weren't brought up to be a farmer's wife. She didn't know how to work. She was as pretty as a picture, and just as useless. She was a flighty thing, with a lot of high-falutin' ideas. It was nothing but trouble after Walter brought her here. I ain't saying the blame was all on Esther's side. I s'pose I ain't any too easy to get along with. A woman that's been at the head of a house for thirty years don't feel like knuckling under to any young chit. Esther hadn't no consideration for me. She come between me and Walter—that's what she did. She set him against me—me, his mother that had slaved for him. He always took her part. Everything she did was right. He never made any allowance for me. I wasn't going to stand it—I wonder who'd expect me to! The house was mine, and so was the farm. I told them that one day, but I didn't suppose—well, they just went. That high-stepping wife of Walter's couldn't swallow my saying that. He had a bit of land down at the Corners, and he put up a shanty on it and took Esther and the baby down there. I told him if he went out of my house he went out of my heart and life. He had his warning. And I told Esther I'd never forgive her for taking my son away from me. She made out she was sorry—I knew she was just as glad as could be in her heart.

"That was two years ago, I ain't ever spoke to either of them since, and I don't ever mean to. I've got on well enough since they left, and I've had some peace of my life. I don't know why I'm telling you all this. You ain't like Mr. Dayton, though. He used to make me mad. He said it was wicked and sinful to show such an unforgiving, unchristian spirit. I s'pose it is wicked. Everybody's a good deal wickedder than they let on. Some show it more than others—that's all the difference.

I ain't going to be trodden on and then be as meek as Moses, I can tell you. I s'pose you think I'm unnatural and inhuman, too. Mr. Dayton did!"

She threw the last sentence at him defiantly. Her thin little body trembled; her knotty, toil-worn fingers were tightly interlaced. He reached forward and took one of the rough, unsightly hands in his own slender white one. It was an impulsive movement as of a son seeking to soothe his mother.



"Why should I think so, Mrs. Kennedy?" said Mr. Douglas gently. "Everybody makes mistakes. I am only very sorry for you all. You have suffered; perhaps your son has, too. He loved you—he must miss you bitterly."

"He doesn't," said Mrs. Kennedy, with an ominous stiffening of her upper lip. "He doesn't care—he's got Esther; that is all he wants."

"No, I don't think that is all he wants. He was a good son, you say. A good son never ceases to love his mother, Mrs. Kennedy. I am sure that your son repents what has passed, even if he has given no sign. If you were to go to him and say"——

"Mr. Douglas, it ain't any use. You mean well, but you don't know. We ain't that kind of people. We never give in. I don't want to give in, for that matter. If Walter can get along without me, I can get along without him."

"Mrs. Kennedy, I had a letter from my mother to-day. There were little blisters on the paper where her tears had fallen. She wrote: 'I miss you so much, my son. I miss your voice, your face, every hour. No one can fill your place.' All good mothers are alike, I believe. Mrs. Kennedy, didn't you miss your boy when he went away?"

For a minute there was no answer. Then she spoke in a low voice:

"Yes, Mr. Douglas, I did—I do. I miss him dreadful—dreadful. I never said so before to a living mortal, but it's true. Sometimes I feel as if I could give most anything to have them all back—Esther and all. She wasn't a bad little creature in some ways. I s'pose I was hard on her. She was very young. I might have made more allowances. I guess I was just jealous—Walter thought so much of her. And then—their little baby—such a dear little thing as that baby was. They called it Ellen after me—Esther suggested that. I haven't seen it for two years. It used to love to have me nurse it and fuss round it. I did set a heap of store by that child. I ain't never talked like this to any one before, Mr. Douglas. I was real mad when I saw you coming. I know the Pawtucket crowd think I'm awful hard. I s'pose I am. It's in my family. We're all as hard as flint. I ain't very happy, though. If Walter would only let on he cared—but he doesn't."

"I believe he does; I know he does. It would break my heart if my mother were

angry with me. I am sure your son feels the same. I am glad you have given me your confidence. I shall pray for you. I will ask my mother to pray for you. You love your son still; go to him and tell him so, and you will find that his mother has never lost her place in his heart.”

There was a silence in the dim room. The last faint gleams of light fell over the bowed gray head by the window. He was a wise and clear-sighted young minister in spite of his youth; he knew when enough had been said. He read the twenty-third psalm and made a simple, earnest prayer. Then he went away with a cheery good-by.

Mrs. Kennedy went with him to the door and watched him as he walked erectly down the garden path with the rough wind of the autumn night swirling the wrinkled, brown leaves about his feet.

She did not go back into the house. Instead, she carefully closed the hall door behind her and sat down on the step, wrapping her red knitted shawl tightly about her sharp shoulders. She sat there in the dark for a long while. Her thin, pinched face looked more thin and pinched than ever in the faint, cold light of the fall evening.

All the warm, red glow of sunset had faded out of the sky. There was only one savage, fiery streak that ran low along the west, against which a row of grim fire came out with black, spectral distinctness. The sky was all curdled over with little rolls of gray clouds, between which a few pale stars glimmered uncertainly. The chilly wind moaned around the house and the maple by the door tossed its gaunt branches wildly, as if some passionate, ghostly thing were wringing its fleshless hands in agony. The row of Lombardys at the foot of the garden stood up like a line of rigid sentinels. The gate creaked dismally as it wavered to and fro in the raw gusts, and the leaves went eddying fitfully up and down the paths in weird, uncanny dances of their own. The whole outdoor world was bleak and unlovely in its leaflessness and gloom. To the old woman crouching on the doorstep it seemed the outward type of her own lonely, loveless life. She shivered and drew her shawl closer around her.

“It’s awful cold and raw to-night,” she muttered, thinking aloud, as was her habit since she had lived alone. “I believe it’ll snow before long. I wish it would—I’m sick and tired of those old bare fields. I dunno what makes me so miserable to-night. I dunno what there was in that young minister to stir me up so. He didn’t *say* much—he only looked it. I dunno but what he’s right. I wish he was—I wish Walter *did* care. It *was* mostly my fault. I was a cantankerous, fault-finding old thing. I needn’t have been so hard on Esther. I guess Mr. Douglas’s mother wouldn’t have been. I’d do different if I had the chance over again. I just wonder what Walter *would* say if I were to go right down there now. I guess he’d stare. I s’pose Esther wouldn’t let

him speak to me, though. I guess she's pretty bitter—I s'pose it ain't much wonder if she is. I believe I would go if I thought it would be any use."

Walter's light gleamed suddenly out away down at the foot of the long hill. She looked at it a minute uncertainly. Then she got up in a quick, decided way and went into the house.

It was very dark and silent. Miranda had gone out. There was nothing alive in the house but herself. She lit a candle and went into the bedroom off the parlor. It was a small and immaculate apartment. She looked at herself in the scroll-framed mirror by the pale flickering light. "I look awful cross and disagreeable," she muttered, "and I'm fearful wrinkled. It's all come these last two years. I guess I don't look much like the minister's mother. I know what she's like as well as if I saw her. She's one of them little women with soft, scrimpy hair and brown eyes like his. And she'd wear something soft—gray silk, maybe—and have a lace ruffle at her neck and her smile will be like his. No, I guess we *don't* look much alike."

She smiled bitterly at her reflected self. In fancy she saw the sweet mild face of the minister's mother beside her own. Could that far-away, unknown woman ever treat her son as *she* had treated Walter?

"There's a big difference in mothers," she said aloud. "I'm on the wrong side of the difference, too. It's late to learn it now—but perhaps not too late. I shall go and see Walter. If he *does* care anything for me I shall find it out. If he doesn't I'll find *that* out too, and so much the better." She put on her best bonnet and shawl. She blew out the light and put the matches by it on the table ready for lighting. She locked the front door and put the key under the step.

"Miranda'll find it there. But I guess I'll be back before she is. I won't stay long maybe. I guess I'm an old fool to go. But I don't want to look in that minister's eyes again and not be able to say I've done my part. I'd hate to have him contrasting me with his own mother. I declare I'm scared to go. I wonder what they will think. I expect Esther'll look me over in that top-lofty way of hers. If I stay here much longer thinking of it I'll get too nervous to go at all."

She went down the path with a little determined rush. The wind swirled her black skirt about her, and the leaves fled elfishly before her feet. There was a short cut down through the fields to the Corners, and she took it, hurrying breathlessly along, as if trying to get ahead of her own thoughts and fears.

It was very dark and bleak. The moon had not risen, and the night was full of weird, eerie sounds—the creaking of boughs above her, the moaning of the wind in the dark tree-tops, the nestling of dead leaves, the vibrations of strips of dried bark on the rail fences.

"I never was out in such a ghostly night," she panted timorously. She was out of breath when she got to Walter's door. She paused, panting. "I don't dare knock," she murmured. "S'posing Walter should come, and when he saw who it was, shut the door in my face! Or if Esther should come! I've a notion to go right back." She hesitated, wavering off and on the steps. A dark silhouette came out against the white blind; it was the restless curly head of a little child. She rapped on the door.

There was a moment's silence within, and then the sound of coming footsteps. The door opened, and Walter stood in the doorway, peering curiously out. The rush of light over his shoulder fell on the little shrinking figure and the anxious, uplifted face. Walter's look of curiosity gave way to one of astonishment and alarm.

"Mother, is it you? Is there anything wrong?"

"No, no, Walter, nothing," she said hurriedly. The naturalness of his words gave her courage. "It's only—I got so lonesome up there; Miranda went out, and I thought I'd run down and see you."

"Come right in, ma," said Walter, heartily, but dazedly. He stepped aside to let her pass. The room was warm and lighted. The tea-table was spread, and Esther was sitting at it. She was a young, pretty woman with a rather careworn face. She got up and came over to meet Mrs. Kennedy.

"Why—I declare, mother! I'm glad to see you. Sit up to the fire. It's real chilly out to-night, isn't it? I shouldn't wonder if we'd have snow. We're just at tea, you see. I suppose you've had yours over hours ago. Walter was away and we waited for him. Maybe you'll sit in and have a cup of tea with us?"

She spoke nervously and hurriedly, as if trying to bridge over an awkward situation gracefully. The baby was holding her dress and peering around her at its grandmother with its round, dark eyes. Walter stood foolishly in the background. He felt in the way.

"I should think you'd feel more like turning me out of doors, Esther," said Mrs. Kennedy tremulously. "I expected nothing else. I guess you ain't overjoyed to see me."

Esther's lips were quivering.

"Don't talk so, mother, we ain't got no hard feelings, Walter and me. Let me take your bonnet."

"No," said Mrs. Kennedy resolutely, "not till I've said what I've come here to say, Esther. I'm real ashamed of the way I've acted to you. I was a mean, spiteful old thing. It ain't much wonder you and Walter got your backs up. I'd do different if I'd another chance. If you and Walter can just forgive me"——

Esther knelt and put her arms about the bowed figure.

“Don’t, mother! I’ve been so ashamed, too. I didn’t behave right, mother. I’ve done some thinking since I came here. I guess I’ve got a little more sense. I ain’t never forgot how you said I’d come between you and Walter. It was true and I had no right to. I was real sassy and nasty to you. And Walter—he’s most fretted to death. You don’t know how bad he’s felt. I’ve coaxed him to go up and see you but he said it was no use. I didn’t dare go alone. Pawtucket folks said you was so bitter against us.”

She laid her head in the older woman’s lap. Mrs. Kennedy stroked the fair waves of hair with gentle fingers.

“I’m real glad you and me’s friends again, Esther. I’ve missed you awful. Seemed as if I never could get over wanting to see that blessed baby around the house. It’s awful lonesome up there. I wish you were all back. We wouldn’t quarrel again.”

Walter came forward and put the baby into his mother’s lap. Then he stooped and kissed her. That kiss meant much, for Walter was not a demonstrative man. He had not kissed his mother since childhood.

It was quite late when Mrs. Kennedy went home. The wind had died away; the moon had risen, touching the hills with silvery glory and casting twinkling shadows of bare boughs and twig-tracery over the wood path. Mrs. Kennedy stepped along briskly and cheerfully. A light was gleaming from her house up on the hill. There was a smile on her face as she thought of the near future—the future which she was to share with Walter and Esther and the baby. And in the background of her dreams glimmered the ideal of a sweet, approving face—a face with tender brown eyes, framed in waves of soft, silver-sprinkled hair.

“I guess the minister’s mother would be glad if she knew all her son has done for me,” whispered Mrs. Kennedy softly.

[THE END.]

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.

[The end of *A Pastoral Call, And How It Brought Happiness to a Disunited Family* by L. M. (Lucy Maud) Montgomery]