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## Communications.

For the Lutheran Visitor.  
"The Little Mother" of the Students of Wittenberg.

A historical sketch by Arnold Weltner, in "Dahleis" for 1870.)

TRANSLATED BY D. H. B.

In the year 1532, the September was sinking in the west. His golden rays shone sweetly through small, round panes of glass, into a large chamber of the old Augustinian monastery at Wittenberg. Dark brown wainscoting, with crude carvings, covered the walls and ceiling of the room. In one corner there was a great stove, made of Dutch tiles, in the form of a pyramid. In the middle of the room stood a large, well-carved table upon a cruciform pedestal, and at the farther window a window, carved settee with reversed cushions. Along the walls extended polished, wooden benches, and above them hung portraits, painted in oil, and with such rare art as to seem to come out of place in a room so unadorned. Among five portraits of children, whose fresh, plump countenances were wonderfully attractive, there hung the picture of a man of forty years, clad in the brown habit of a priest, whose round, expressive and beardless face was enlivened by wonderfully bright and animated eyes. Next to him was the picture of a beautiful bride, whose oval face, large, sparkling eyes, smiling lips and saucy little nose, indicated fortune and youth. A deep blue hair net, held by three rows of white pearls, fastened on a narrow strip of embroidered linen, confined the hair, combed back from the expressive, fair and smooth forehead. Over a tight-fitting, high-necked dress of dark material, with long and narrow sleeves, and over a silver shield, of rich, wrought work, that covered the breast, there was wound a heavy gold chain in a triple fold. The dress was adorned with a costly brooch of pearls and precious stones, and from the ears hung tiny, golden bells.

Right beneath this picture, before a smoky-painted, open chest, knelt a lady of 53 years of age, whose grey hair was concealed by a black widow's cap; her pale face was wan and sorrowful, and her eyes heavy with many tears. This same lady was once the happy, joyful bride whose picture hung above her—Catharine von Bora, and now, for six years, the widow of Martin Luther.

"The Doctress," as all Wittenberg called her, and "Our Little Mother," as she was called by the many students whom Luther's widow was compelled to lodge and board, in order, by that slender and toilsome means, to keep herself and her children above actual want. This "poor widow, forsaken by every one," as she styles herself in an appeal to the king of Denmark, was obliged, on the morrow, for the second time since her dear, beloved Doctor's death, to leave from home with her children, to poverty and great anxiety. The plague had broken out in Wittenberg! For this reason she was now engaged in packing her little all into the motley-colored chest. The entire University was preparing to move to Torgau on to-morrow. This was the fourth time, in fifty years, that the University was driven from Wittenberg by the plague! The ever-faithful Melancthon kindly advised his dear Luther's widow, and the students besought their "Little Mother" to permit them to escort her to Torgau. With a sigh she yielded; for where else could poor Catharine go? There was no one on earth to whom she could resort! Alas! "with the Doctor Frederick wisdom had died, and piety with the Elector John," as Luther had too truly prophesied. The Elector John Frederick the Magnanimous, after Luther's death, wrote to his widow, and promised her protection and aid; but he was far away from his country, languishing in prison, by order of the Emperor, and himself greatly in need of the protection and aid which he had so kindly tendered to Luther's widow.

Without, in every street, was heard the dull and dreadful toll of the death-bell. Scarcely was there a cessation during the long, weary day, in rapid succession, throughout the entire day, the victims of the plague were taken without the Elster gate and deposited in the cemetery. Very seldom, during these fearful days of death, were heard the cheerful voices of the students, as they

now sang, in full chorus, from an adjoining room:  
"My love, her lips are cherry red,  
Her face blooms like the rose  
When it has spread its petals wide,  
Above the violets at its side,  
Within the flowery bed.

O that my love, sweet thought of life!  
Would let me cast the lot,  
How beautiful it then would be,  
To win her for myself, and she  
Would then become my wife."

A sad and gloomy scene was the picture of Catharine, as she arose to listen to this song, and she said to herself: "These are my students—happy, joyful youths who can sing a love and roses when perhaps death is even now knocking at their door. Above all the rest I hear the clear voice of my Paul, and his youth-fled heart securely beats the while for Anna von Warbeck. Though he has not imparted his secret to his mother—poor boy, he is only nineteen! yet I can read it all in his eyes. The golden hair of Anna holds him a prisoner, and will not permit him to go away and fight the Turks, as my dear, sainted Doctor often jestingly prophesied of the strong and sprightly boy. But will the high-born vice-chancellor, Vitus von Warbeck, bestow his daughter upon a poor medical student, though he be Martin Luther's son? God will order all things right for the sake of my sainted husband!"

The widow again knelt by the chest. With a sorrowful heart she carefully packed away a number of silver goblets. Thoughts of her beloved Doctor were never absent from her mind. How he prized these goblets, especially as they were the gifts of his dear Electors, grateful parishioners and beloved friends and relatives. She remembered how cheerfully Doctor Martin could be, if after his hard and toilsome day's labor, he could sit in this room, surrounded by his dearest friends, Philip Melancthon and Doctor Pommer, Lucas Cranach, Casper Cruciger, Justus Jonas and the other students who were admitted to his household. Then the can, filled to the brim with Elmbecker beer or Rhine wine, always the gifts of grateful hearts, was circulated freely, and the silver goblets rang against each other while the joyous voices of the students sang:

"Thou art welcome, truly welcome,  
Noble, royal cup of grape-juice."

With loving forethought, Luther left in his will, all the silver goblets to his Katie, whilst he says of her: "She was ever a pious, true and worthy wife, and not only a wife; for she was also my housekeeper." Frequently, during the terrible wars, a silver goblet was reluctantly sold to provide daily bread for the poor widow and her children. Suddenly a clinking sound is heard in one of the goblets. She turns it up and two gold rings drop into her hand. As she looked upon the rings, she could no longer restrain her tears, for those rings had held together two noble, loving hearts for twenty happy, happy years; far the happiest years of her life. They were her wedding rings!

Catharine von Bora arose from the chest. She could not proceed before she had given vent to her sad feelings in silent, copious tears. She took her seat by the window, on the quaint settee, where he so often occupied the reversed, but now vacant seat—he who first placed, with deep emotion, one of the rings upon her finger—he who now, for six years, has been sleeping so calmly in the castle-church. Tears after tears rolled over her pale cheeks, and fell upon the rings that lay in her lap.

Both rings are very massive and heavy. The one is a double ring, the two being united by a diamond and a ruby, expressive of love and constancy. Within are engraved the letters M. L. D. (Martin Luther, Doctor) and C. V. B. (Catharine von Bora) and the words, WHAT GOD HAS JOINED TOGETHER, LET NO MAN PUT ASUNDER. The other ring is threefold, that is, a smaller ring on each side of the principal one, held in their place by a large ruby. Representations of scenes in the passion of Christ are wrought upon them in the most exquisite and beautiful style of workmanship. Especially will be noticed the figure of the Saviour, executed with rarest art, and so perfect that each muscle can be distinctly traced twining with agony. This is a masterpiece of Albert Durer of Nuremberg, at the same time painter, copper engraver, engraver on wood and stone, and goldsmith. He made Luther's wedding ring under the direction of Pirkheimer, Luther's friend. Inside

of the ring are the initials of Martin Luther and Catharine von Bora, and the date June 13, 1527.

Yes, that was a joyful day when Catharine gave herself with all her heart, to "her beloved Doctor," for twenty years of richly blessed and uninterrupted happiness. Through the crystal tear drops the rings seemed to enlarge and surround themselves with glowing, golden circles. O, how much joy, and love, and heavenly peace, and God-given blessing were enfolded in each circle of that bright halo! Hours, months, years of a happy life in God! How wonderful appears the first and largest golden circle, enfolded within it two pure human hearts, that during the life on earth could never be separated for a moment, and now, while the one is here and the other away, behold! the circle enlarges, reaches to heaven and still enfolds the two!

It was 5 o'clock, P. M., on Tuesday after Trinity, June 13th, 1527, in the reception room of Philip Reichenbach, in Burgomaster street in Wittenberg, a man, clad in the brown habit of a priest, traces of monastic tonsure still visible on his head, stood in the presence of a blushing maiden of 26 years. This was Doctor Martin Luther, Professor of Theology and chief Pastor of the City church of Wittenberg. The brown habit, in which he was clad, was presented to him by his dear, sainted friend, the Elector Frederick, the Wise, when Luther, a year before, laid aside his cow as the last evidence of his monastic life. Behind Luther stood his dearest friends; John Bagenhagen, Doctor Pommeranus, the learned John Apel and the artist Lucas Cranach. At the side of Catharine von Bora stood, with a waggish smile on his countenance, her Foster-father, Philip Reichenbach, who afterwards became clerk of the city and then Burgomaster.

"My dearest Katie," said Luther heartily, and extended both hands to the blushing maiden, "I have long since used my utmost efforts to secure for you a good husband. A short time ago I wrote to Jerome von Baumgartner, at Nuremberg; for I thought you loved Jerome when a student at Wittenberg and a guest in my house; but his relatives have selected for him a patrician lady of his own city. May God bless them! Then I thought of Casper Glatz, lately made vicar of Orlamund, and who, in accordance with my advice, intended to marry. I regarded him as a suitable husband for you. Casper Glatz, with wisdom in his head, and my earnest denunciations against the sins and irregularities of celibacy in his heart, despised the threats of deposition, imprisonment and excommunication proclaimed every Sunday from popish pulpits against the marriage of a priest. Nor were these idle threats, for they had already been put into execution against the brave Jacob Seidler, who is now incarcerated at the castle of Stolpen by the papists for the crime of getting married. Through brother Amador, in due form, I offered to you Casper Glatz as a suitable husband for you. But what did my Katie reply? Freely from the heart she said, 'The vicar of Orlamund I do not desire. Casper Glatz is too unchristian, impetuous, violent and passionate. But if you, reverend Pastor Amador, or Doctor Luther, should desire me to his wife, verily I shall not say nay.' This honest declaration reached my heart, and now I ask you, Miss Catharine von Bora, will you become my true and faithful wife, one in whom a man's heart may safely confide?"

Tears came to relieve the embarrassment and pent up feelings of Catharine, and with difficulty she replied: "Your rebuke, Doctor, is so severe, but just. That I, a poor homeless man, entirely dependent upon the favor and charity of strangers, should aspire to become the wife of Doctor Luther, while there are so many wealthy, high-born and learned ladies in the city and throughout the land more worthy of such a station, deserves a rebuke. Your mockery wounds me deeply, and is especially bitter to my heart; because, during my entire life, I shall not be able to regain the esteem I have forfeited by my folly. But one thing I beg of you, Doctor, do not think me ungrateful for the many favors for which I am indebted to you, even to this hour. God knows I am not ungrateful! I can never forget your

kindness to me. Through your instrumental God has led me in a wonderful way. How many gloomy years have I passed in sadness within the walls of the Cistercian Convent at Nimptleben, and the many other unfortunate ones who did not renounce the world by their own personal inclination, but were buried in the convent, where simple children, many were, five years, by their parents and cardinals in order to rid themselves of the burden of their support! At last I was satisfied and tried to be happy, and prayed earnestly and constantly; but suddenly a strong conviction seized me that all this was vain lip service. Over the gloomy convent walls, so joyful, so inviting, so life-inspiring, just like approaching spring time, came your doctrines, Doctor Martin. A longing desire to enjoy this spring time took possession of me and many others of the poor nuns. So earnest, so powerful was this longing that the most humbly begged our parents for our salvation's sake, to take us from the convent. They were unwilling to receive the burden—'their own flesh and blood'—into their houses again. We therefore appealed to you for deliverance, and you had mercy on us. You sent the brave, pious Leonard Koppe, of Torgau, to Nimptleben to lead away the body of Christ from Satan." It was a beautiful Easter night in early spring, the stars were twinkling in the cloudless heavens, and the balmy air breathed in sighs. "Christ has arisen . . . even for you," was chanted as the trembling nuns fled over the convent walls and hid themselves in a covered wagon, in which were empty herring barrels brought by Leonard from Wittenberg for the purpose of greater security. How heartily, Doctor Martin, you received the fugitives; and you found great difficulty to secure for us the supply for our necessities and places to sleep in respect families. It seems that the care of us, your proteges, was never out of your mind nor absent from your heart, and especially were you concerned, with God's blessing, to have us happily married to honest, christian husbands. How thankful those, my sisters, are for the selections you have made for them! I alone, through selfishness and wicked pride, wished to select for myself, but have been brought back to proper humility by your present well-deserved rebuke. I thank you for it, Doctor, though my poor heart is bleeding. Now you may write to Casper Glatz that Catharine von Bora is willing to marry him, and, by the help of God, will be to him a true and faithful wife, provided he does not scorn her."

"O, my Katie, how I thank you for these humble sentiments!" said Luther, as his countenance beamed with sincere joy. "This gives me a certainty that I am not proud and haughty. Your modest demeanor and self-respect, so different from the bold, every-day conduct of the world, led many to lay pride and haughtiness to your charge. No, my dear Katie, I am neither joking nor trifling with you. You, Catharine von Bora, are my deliberate choice. May the Lord God grant his blessing! A week ago I was overwhelmed with doubt as to whether it would be beneficial or detrimental to my usefulness and labors to marry. My dear parents, when I was studying law, urged me strongly to give them a daughter. When, in my blindness, I rushed into a monastery and became a monk, my father was heartily sorry; because he had hoped to see me married into a wealthy family. He was so displeased that from that hour he no more addressed me by the title of which he was so proud when I had become a student. Moreover, my dear Elector openly and severely censured the celibacy of the priests, and requested me to put to practice my teachings on this subject by marrying, and thus strengthen the weak consciences of others who may hesitate. Most earnestly I prayed God to direct me in this matter. Yesterday evening Bro. Amador brought me your answer to him, namely, that you did not want Casper Glatz for your husband; but that you would not reject Luther. I regarded this as a merciful answer to my prayer. During the most fervid prayer last night I enjoyed the consciousness that it was the Lord's will. For a long time past, my Katie, you have been very dear to my heart as a modest and pious maiden. I ask you again, before God and these christian people, Catharine von Bora, will you be my true and faithful wife? If so, please

answer openly, yes, and Dr. Pommer will give us his blessing."  
"Reverend Doctor, I must now believe that you are not mocking me, a poor maiden, but that you desire sincerely to exalt me to your own station. Yes, Doctor Martin Luther, with pure affection I have loved you for a long time, and I pray God to aid me to be a useful and pious wife to you. But to-day? In this you can not be sincere. How can I arrange my little matters so as not to bring reproach upon you when I enter your house as Madam Doctress?"

"My dear Katie, do you imagine that Doctor Martin intends to marry your wardrobe and furs? No, in this very hour Doctor Pommer shall join us in marriage. Deferred marriages are often accompanied by dangers; because Satan is ever busy to cause impediments to their happy consummation through evil tongues and false and pretended friends. For this reason I have not communicated my intentions, either by word or hint, to any of those worthy friends, not even to Philip, much as I love him; because, in many matters he is too timid and apprehensive, and regards the eyes of the world far too much. There will be no lack of papistical enmity on account of this step, and even many of my true friends will shake their heads because Doctor Martin has thought of marriage. Out in the country matters appear more gloomy; for the unruly and unthinking peasantry may be driven to plunder and incendiarism, and, if may be, cause bloodshed; but my trust and consolation are in God. Go then, my dearest Katie, into your little chamber, and there await our friend Lucas Cranach's visit, who will assist in adorning you as a bride."

Adorned, just like the picture hanging on the wall, so faithfully painted by the art of Lucas Cranach, Catharine von Bora returned with her hand in that of Barbara Cranach. Master Reichenbach, her foster-father, received her, and presented her to Doctor Luther, with a hearty good will, John Bagenhagen performed the marriage ceremony, and invoked the blessing of God upon the happy couple. Two plain rings were used for the occasion. Doctor Apel wrote the marriage certificate, and the whole company signed their names as witnesses. Then Master Reichenbach hastened to prepare a little wedding supper for the company.

O, what a commotion this sudden marriage produced in the city! All Wittenberg took the deepest interest in manifesting their best wishes for the happiness of their beloved Doctor Martin. The city council, the day after his marriage, sent him a resolution of kindest greetings and best wishes from their body, which was accompanied by a magnificent present of wine, consisting of a keg of Malmsey, one of Rhine wine, and six cases of Franconian. They dated this present the 27th of June, the Tuesday after St. John's day, being the day upon which Dr. Martin openly conducted his dear Katie from her late residence to his own apartments in the old Augustinian Monastery, where he had ordered a stately entertainment for his parents and friends. In addition to the wine, the city sent a keg of the celebrated Elmbecker beer, an entire piece of linen, and twenty gold pieces of the old Saxon coinage, though at the time the city had an empty treasury, and were obliged to borrow the money from a church. The University, through their beloved "grammarians," Philip Melancthon, sent a costly silver cup, three-quarters of an ell in height, beautifully gold-lined and chased in the most exquisite style of art. The table was beautifully furnished with a variety of game by Luther's friend, George Spalatin, Court preacher and Secretary to the Elector. John Pfister, who had doffed his monk's cowl the previous Easter, was, unanimously aided with much honor, installed as cup-bearer, and he acted his part with skill and the happiest results. The new silver cups, the gifts of Luther's wealthy friends, were thoroughly tried. It would be impossible to give all the Greek and Latin marriage songs recited and sung by the learned guests at this marriage feast.

At this supplementary wedding feast, or in-fair, Luther and Catharine, for the first time, wore the wedding rings made by Albert Durer's master hand. They had been sent from Nuremberg, the day before, by Luther's friend, Pirkheimer, accom-

panied by a beautiful poetical greeting. During the evening, the students gave the Doctor and his bride a vocal serenade, in full chorus. The song and tune were both composed by Luther himself, years before, and no doubt forgotten by him at this time. The following were two of the verses:

Happy is he who fears the Lord,  
And walks in His divine command!  
In faith he leans upon His word,  
Supported by His gracious hand.  
His wife, within his household trace,  
A fruitful vine will there be found.  
Like olive plants, his children, too,  
His cheerful table will surround.  
May golden circles, ever new, clear  
as sunlight, surround those wedding  
rings!—many hours, full of happiness and peace!

[To be continued.]

"Peace, Peace, Deep as a River."  
The sentence at the head of this paper was the dying testimony of an officer of the Royal Artillery, who was mortally wounded during one of the recent wars in New Zealand. A bullet struck him in the face, shattering both jaws and cutting away his tongue; of course he was thus rendered speechless. As is usual, he was carried to the rear, and when he was met by his wife, Captain M. made signs for writing materials, which having been given him, he wrote what, from the terrible nature of the wound, he was prevented from uttering with his lips: "PEACE, PEACE, DEEP AS A RIVER!" and shortly after fell asleep.

You see, dear reader, what perfect rest of soul this dear soldier had, which enabled him to leave behind such a blessed testimony. May he, as his own life's blood was ebbing from him, be reminded of how that "peace, peace, deep as a river," had been made—eaten by Jesus, the "Prince of Peace," having made peace through the blood of His cross." (Col. 1: 20). There was no thought upon his mind about "How can I make my peace with God?" or, "What must I do to be saved?" On the contrary, he knew whom he had believed, and that the question of "sin and sins had been forever settled between God and himself through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He knew, not only what peace with God was—how that it had been made by the blood of Jesus' cross—but also that "He is our peace" at God's right hand; consequently he had the "peace of God" keeping his heart and mind, and, more than that, the "God of peace" with him. How very, very real is this, dear reader, to the soul that is simple! Peace has been made, (Col. 1: 20); peace is now preached, (Acts 1: 33); God is the "God of peace," (Phil. 4: 9); and what is—must be—the result? "I have peace."

## Selections.

### Ill-Treated Creditors.

There is great temptation, in these times, to consider only our own interests, and often our creditors suffer in our excessive selfishness. Most likely our greatest creditor and benefactor will be most neglected. The facts warrant this reference to the shape of our nature. God asks by the prophet, "Will a man rob God?" and answers, "Ye have robbed me in tithes and offerings." We can easily see how, for most of us have some consciousness of the subject. We have heard of a man who, by God's mercy, had been raised from what he himself thought a bed of death—who wearied heaven with his prayers and inconsiderate bribes in the shape of promises of what he could do with his wealth if well again. But health made him forget. When a friend reminded him, saying, "Don't you recognize your debt to God both by your promise and value received?" "Yes," said he, "I owe God, but he is not pressing me as hard as the rest of my creditors." And this is true of many not half so candid, who live only to impose on their most patient, yet most injured creditor. With the slightest reverse we haste to the divine side of our obligations to retrench. Who has heard of any bankrupt giving up his tobacco, or any crippled in their resources giving up their jewels? But almost the first thing is to give less to the poor, less to the treasury of the church. They will give up their pens, give up their religious paper, but keep the daily political or secular journals, costing three times as much—leaving their families as ignorant of the spirit of the church, and of the progress of Christ's kingdom, as of the sources of the Nile, but they will keep their horses and carriages to the brink of ruin.

It is sad to think that many can only get injustice and ingratitude to God out of their reverses; it is such a prodigality of divine privilege, for adversity ought to yield better fruit. And it is, if they can have no higher motive, such wretched policy. For if faith enough has survived your disaster to believe that God rules, and gives, and scatters wealth, what motive could possess him to keep it for you, or help you regain it again when lost?

When a man is financially crippled, if his creditors have any confidence in him, he can usually get an extension. But with what face would you ask God for an extension when you were delinquent to every obligation? He ought to have been the preferred creditor, because he furnished all the capital. We need only consider to see that it is mean and unworthy of men to man, but especially unworthy of a christian to his bountiful benefactor, and the worst economy ever practised, in hope to retrieve our earthly losses by compounding our obligations to heaven. If any have inconsiderately fallen into such suicidal policy, and have curtailed on the Godward side of their obligations, bring back the dues with penitence, for the cries of need are after you, and its form will overtake you. If you have robbed God, return the ill-gotten gain and a trespass-offering before your worst wronged Creator lays the hand of justice upon you, saying, "Pay me what thou owest!"—Presbyterians.

A gentleman came to Sir Eardly Wilnot in great wrath at an injury he had suffered from some person in worldly position, and was considering how he could best show his resentment. "Would it be manly to resent it?" "Yes, but Godlike to forgive it." The idea had an instant soothing effect, and he left that interview thinking no longer of revenge.