

**THE SWISS PASTOR:
THE LIFE OF THE REV.
F. A. A. GONTHIER**

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The Swiss Pastor: The Life of the Rev. F. A. A. Gonthier by L. Vulliemin & C. Vulliemin

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THE SWISS PASTOR.



Church and Parsonage of St. Cergues.

THE SWISS PASTOR.

THE LIFE

OF THE

REV. F. A. A. GONTHIER.

FROM THE FRENCH OF HIS NIEPHEWS,

L. AND C. VULLIEMIN.

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NOTE.

THE present edition of the Memoir of that eminent servant of God, M. GONTHIER, is substantially copied from the edition by the *Religious Tract Society*, London. The principal change is, that the introduction by the Rev. C. B. TAYLER, which constitutes the preface to the English copy, occupies the place of a conclusion in the American edition.

LIFE

OF THE

REV. F. A. A. GONTHIER.

TO THE FRIENDS OF THE PASTOR GONTHIER.

YOU ask us, as with one voice, to speak to you of our friend. You claim a share in our inheritance of sad, sweet recollections. You were well acquainted with his life of continued trial, and would fain know something of the inner man; you would have us speak to you of the Spirit of power in a heart so tender, yet so severely tried; so weak, yet at the same time so enduring.

We will attempt to obey your wishes. Yet we entreat you not to expect from us more than we are able to perform. We cannot describe our friend as he really was. Had he distinguished himself in science, in letters, or in the strife of the interests of the day, the things we should have to tell, would be found already written before the eyes of men, in characters easily read. It is, however, of his inward life that you wish us to speak. You desire to read the secret depths of his pious and affectionate

heart. But where is the heart to which another heart is really known? Does not the spirit of man continually elude the comprehension of his fellow-man? Its life is motion, nay, progressive motion, advancing ever towards infinitude. It may, indeed, be said of those to whom the Lord himself has pointed out the high mark which they press forward to reach, that their horizon is far more extended than that of other men. Their view of human things is always more elevated. The air they breathe is too pure, their sense of feeling is too exquisite, the colours of their sky are too delicately tinted for us to be able to depict them. Do we at times suppose that we have reached their standard? We find that they have already far surpassed us in strong faith, in purity of conscience, in holy love. It is one of their trials on earth, that they should not be fully understood. It is one of ours to remain so far behind them. We may go still further. Could we be enabled to understand them better, it would still be as difficult to be faithful interpreters to them. How is it possible to describe the tone, the manner, which are the index of the soul within, without which the faithfully rendered words can give but a faint and faithless representation? The very expression of countenance,—who shall convey an idea of its evanescent character, though it portrays so vividly the deep and glowing feelings of the heart? And yet we owe to you, as a debt, that which we have received from him. Circumstances of which we were the sole witnesses, words which we alone have heard, and which have taught our hearts many an affecting lesson—the record of these things is due to you; for you revered our father, and your

affection was delightful to him, during the weary season of his protracted sufferings. It is right also to preserve to the church some memorial of a life devoted to its sacred service, and which may still in some manner serve it. This obligation, which has, indeed, about it more of comfort than of sadness, we will endeavour to fulfil. We will try to retrace some features of that character which is ever present to our thoughts; and to recall him who was sent by our blessed Lord to be our guide through this our earthly career.

There are some dispositions singularly gentle and tender, and extremely impressible; alike fitted for exquisite enjoyment and for keen sufferings, of a sensibility soon excited and affected, and perhaps as soon exhausted. You know that notwithstanding he possessed such a delicate and lively temperament, his countenance was at once calm and penetrating; his judgment was remarkable for its equity. He had a quick and clear perception and an astonishing discernment of character. But his distinguishing feature was the overflowing affection of his heart. It could be said of him, that it was necessary to his existence that he should have something to love. He was naturally formed for strong attachment, for filial love, for devoted friendship, for conjugal and paternal affection, for promoting the happiness of his fellow-creatures. He seemed to look for all his happiness in these enjoyments. He sought, in fact, for heaven upon earth. You know how he gave himself up entirely to his friends, to his family, to the service of the church. Almost all these links were broken. He saw all those he most loved laid in the grave before him;